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Perceptions of the Effects of Workforce Development Training on Vocational Interests of Adjudicated African American Youth with Disabilities

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Perceptions of the Effects of Workforce Development Training on Vocational Interests of Adjudicated African American Youth with Disabilities

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Mary Jane Smith, for her long term commitment to academic values and an attitude to not to quit. A tribute goes out to my wife, Evelyn Walls Baker, for her loyalty and support during the completion of the research and writing of the paper. And to my children, I hope they will be inspired to do it better than Dad as they pursue their dreams.

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Perceptions of the Effects of Workforce Training on Vocational Interests of Adjudicated African American Youth with Disabilities

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This phenomenological study was undertaken in an attempt to understand the meaning of the experience of being in workforce development training. African American male youth who had recently or were presently involved in the workforce development training were selected as participants.

Using a naturalistic inquiry approach, the study examined the perceptions of the effects of workforce training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities incarcerated in two Texas juvenile detention facilities. The study examined the relevant factors, influences and experiences of incarcerated African American male youth with disabilities participating in workforce development training on their vocational interests. Also of interests was how involvement in the workforce development training program while incarcerated facilitated the career exploration process undertaken by these adolescents to test ideas about "what I want to be when I grow up." The principal questions of this study explored at whether the workforce training provided by Project RIO-Y, home, school

and community would be positive action in support of prior influences for African American male youth.

The findings clearly indicated that a number of factors, such as family is a major influence in developing vocational interests, school has limited influence on the youth vocational interests, community plays a large part in directing the youth to support services and creates an environment for them to go through vocational development stages, but with limited exposure to careers, and Project RIO-Y influenced this small group of African American males' perception that their vocational interests through training were enhanced with vocational exploration and school information to pursue careers. Although many of the youth in the study had not experience work or participated in vocational education in school, they had developed some work experience with soft skills training while in the program. They also had classroom training to develop their vocational interests while they were incarcerated.

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Chapter I

Over the past 25 years, the Nation's economy has changed dramatically in response to technological advancement and global competition. Reportedly, these changes have profound implications for the labor market, the American worker, and the workplace (Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth, 2000). The employment and training report described critical challenges confronted by adjudicated African youth with disabilities as they endeavor to effectively participate in the workforce, acquire workforce development skills, develop their vocational interests and train for the labor market to meet employers' and industry requirements.

Given the high unemployment rates of African American male youth with disabilities who are adjudicated, it is essential to develop intervention strategies designed to reduce this problem. Lankard (1993) argues that workforce training can play a significant role in the ability of youth to overcome family, school, community, and cultural barriers to employment and to achieve economic independence of welfare services. Lankard (1993) views workforce development training as the acquisition of soft work skills that enable a person to move from one job to another as demanded by the changing completive market. These soft skills are work-related competencies in interpersonal communications, teamwork, and the ability to evaluate job data and understand employer systems such as group projects (SCANS, 1992). Unfortunately, there are often inadequate

workforce training resources in poor communities and schools (A Special Report of the Texas Kid Count Project, 1997) and limited programs for African Americans youth who are incarcerated (Mauer, 1999). Workforce training can play a significant role, however, in the ability of African American youth, who are disabled, have special needs in school, or are at-risk for school failure and have been adjudicated, to successfully transition from their community and school environment to an entry-level job (Beck, 2000). The academic and career development of this population is often delayed because of lack of career guidance from the family and the community and the absence of workforce training (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988).

To succeed vocationally, the adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities will require a number of different services such as special education services, basic language skills, vocational competencies, job specific skills, and personal attributes like, motivation, discipline and persistence, to develop workforce skills. The workforce system in the juvenile justice facilities must shape youth's attitude and belief systems so that they can pursue their vocational dream.

For a range of reasons, workforce preparation, when it does exist in juvenile justice systems, often fails to effectively lead to the development of vocational interests. In many cases, existing workforce development training programs are not based on the realities of the labor market within the youth's

State, region or local community (Employment and Training, 2000). In other cases, the juvenile justice system's limited experience and knowledge of labor market requirements may limit understanding of vocational issues on the part of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. Finally, because of scarce resources, the juvenile justice system often cannot afford to implement a cohesive vocational development strategy targeted to vocational interests of this population. Consequently, adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities will find it difficult to directly apply their training and realize their vocational interests while they are incarcerated.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Signed into law on August 7, 1998, created an integrated system of training and employment programs for low income adults and youth. Although comprehensive in scope, there are specific requirements for youth to participate. WIA defines eligible youth as low income and aged between 14 and 21. It allows for 5% of youth in the local area, who are not low-income, to receive services if they face certain barriers to school completion or employment. The barriers include being a school dropout; lacking basic literacy skills; or being homeless, a runaway or a juvenile offender.

Workforce development programs and activities, included under the aegis of WIA were designed to increase the likelihood of an individual's employment, job retention and earning capacity. Activities and services provided include job-search and placement assistance, vocational skill assessment, worker

training, supportive services with emphasis on academic and skill attainment. In addition, WIA funded programs provide guidance and counseling (including drug- and alcohol- abuse counseling and referral), leadership development, and summer and part-time employment and internships. All of these activities are being delivered through a workforce investment system, comprised of various public and private agencies in partnership with communities nationwide. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 mandated the streamlining and integration of these various groups in order to: (a) improve the skills of the workforce; (b) reduce welfare dependency; and (c) enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

Workforce development has emerged to describe a relatively wide range of activities and programs. For example, many professionals involved in administering secondary vocational education programs, welfare-to-work and other public assistance programs, and juvenile justice initiatives now use the term workforce development to describe their services (Jacobs, 2001). The term also describes an extensive array of training and educational programs available to adjudicated youth with disabilities. For this study, workforce development will be interpreted as training that focuses on soft skills and career exploration. Soft skills in this study include a diverse range of skills such as the ability to communicate effectively, creativity, analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, team-building, listening skills, diplomacy, flexibility, change readiness, and

self-awareness (Caudron, 1999). Soft skills development and career exploration are the goal of Project Re-Integration of Offender-Youth Program for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities incarcerated in a Texas Youth Commission juvenile detention facility to enter employment or go back to school. That is, the training becomes a skills building program for career development to influence the vocational interests of the participants. Project RIO-Y is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of its emerging prominence, workforce development has not undergone sufficient scholarly scrutiny especially regarding its impact on adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities (Jacob, 2001). The individuals enrolled in a workforce development training program in juvenile justice correctional facilities often have multiple problems and several barriers that impede the development of their vocational interests: they often lack job-specific skills, soft skills, and the kind of values (including motivation, punctuality, persistence, the ability to work with others) necessary to identify their vocational choice.

African American male youth with disabilities detained in juvenile justice facilities are also disadvantaged in relation to their peers (Trescott, 1990). They may be unable to succeed in and/or access education and training systems for a number of different services including basic language skills and mathematics

competencies; job-specific skills; personal attributes like motivation, discipline, and persistence; help in conquering drug and alcohol dependencies, or mental health problems; and decision-making skills, making it difficult for them to negotiate programs on their own so they require case management such as health and human services referrals (Feichtner, 1989). For example, Trescott (1990) theorizes that many of these youngsters are marginally literate or illiterate and have only limited basic math skills. Furthermore, more than one third of these youth have reading skills below the fourth grade level and 17% of those sentenced to adult prison have not completed elementary school. At the end of their term, males have only 1 in 12 chance of graduating from college and 1 in 4 chances of becoming a high school drop-out statistic. Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth (2000) found that for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities to develop vocational strength they have to overcome some of the following barriers: (a) lack of basic academic skills, (b) low educational attainment, (c) poor workforce preparation, (d) poor social skills, (e) absence of peer and adult role models, (f) mental health issues, (g) mobility and jurisdictional control, (h) disjointed treatment/aftercare/service delivery plans, (i) low expectations by self and others, (j) negative peer influences, (k) security/safety risk, and (l) negative perceptions by community/employers.

These social and economic indicators have pointed, with alarming consistency, to the undeniable fact that large numbers of African American males are incarcerated in the juvenile justice system (Noguera, 1999). Noguera found that regardless of whether the indicators relate to employment, education, health or crime African American males are consistently clustered toward the end of the society's worst because they are disproportionately placed in the juvenile justice system (Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth, 2000). The study theorizes that they also are generally the most vulnerable to incarceration. Nationally, there have been numerous reports of the disproportional placement and poor educational services rendered to adjudicated African American men with disabilities (Freeman & Rogers, 1999; Johnson, Farrell & Stoloff, 1998; Weatherspoon, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was threefold: (a) to determine the need for training for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in the Texas Youth Commission facilities to prepare them to enter the workforce; (b) to describe the impact of workforce development training on the development of their vocational interests; and (c) to discuss implications of workforce development influences provided through home, school, and community resource persons for adjudicated African American males with disabilities incarcerated in the Texas Youth Commission facility.

The researcher studied the experiences of adjudicated African American males with disabilities incarcerated in the Texas Youth Commission detention facilities during their involvement in a workforce development training program. Insight into the influence of workforce development training on vocational interests of African Americans who are making career decisions may create a framework for understanding how workforce development training may affect African American male youths' perception of their vocational interests. This research will address some of the current gaps in the literature regarding the provision of workforce development training to incarcerated African American male youth with disabilities.

A variety of programming approaches have been developed to help juvenile offenders become law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, these programs remain largely ineffectual, and recidivism continues to be unacceptably high (Josi & Sechrest, 1999). To provide quality workforce training and employment services, residential facilities must address the behavioral, educational, and social profiles of confined youth. Effective residential employment and workforce development training programs include those that operate on-site businesses and employ youth at competitive wages, engage youth in community service and restitution projects, prepare youth for employment using an entrepreneurship or a service learning experience, or training youth for specific jobs using industry-approved curricula (Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth, 2001).

African American males and other minorities constitute overwhelming numbers within the criminal justice system (Mauer, 1999). These youth, who are often disenfranchised from the education system and who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system find it difficult to learn marketable skills and compete for jobs (Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth, 2001). The link between crime and lack of economic opportunity requires the country's concerted attention through collaboration among employers, the juvenile justice system, and the workforce development system.

Despite the large number of youth housed in detention facilities with identified special education needs, there are additional youths who have never been identified as having a disability or have been misidentified (Education Disability and Juvenile Justice, 1999). Leone (1993) found that more than 1 in 3 youths who enter correctional facilities has previously received special education services. There are a considerably higher percentage of adjudicated youths with disabilities than is found in public elementary and secondary schools. The numbers of adjudicated juveniles many with diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities increased 37% between 1989 and 1998 (EDJJ, 1999). Some of the data describes populations of adolescents with many disabilities. Such disabilities are of long duration and have involved multiple agencies, such as juvenile justice and mental health. The majority of these youth had experience previous placement and their level of functioning was poor across several domains such as family,

school, and legal system (Carlson, Barr, & Young, 1994). Increasingly, juvenile detention and corrections centers are filled beyond capacity and struggle to provide adequate educational, workforce training, mental health and social services to confine youths, many of whom have special needs, including disabilities. Given the diverse composition and needs of this population (different patterns of work, living, educational and social experiences), a comprehensive education and workforce development training program for incarcerated youth with disabilities must be provided that includes basic academic skills, high school completion, Graduate Equivalent Diploma preparation, special education, workforce training, computer education, and other programs as needed aimed at enhancing youths' social, cognitive, and life skills (White, 2000). Limited empirical research has addressed the effects of workforce development on vocational interests of adjudicated and African American male youths with disabilities, resulting in the absence of understanding and impact of workforce development training and on the vocational interests of adjudicated African American with disabilities.

Training for the adjudicated population with disabilities has become increasingly job focused, geared primarily towards preparing participants for immediate employment and providing training simultaneously with work experience (Hayes & Way, 2000). Researchers also found that the career path adjudicated African American males take from childhood into adulthood is

shaped by broad demographics including poverty, race, gender and schools. During their residential stay, these societal forces may affect adolescent experiences in ways that facilitate and enhance African American males' preparation to become successful men or in ways that leave them unprepared for adulthood. Knowledgeable projections about how the vocational experience and preparation for working and learning for adjudicated African American youth with disabilities are likely to be transformed in the future is vital for shaping agendas for research, for alerting juvenile justice educators, policymakers, and workforce development practitioners to new realities, and for formulating thoughtful responses to emerging dilemmas.

Given the dearth of data regarding the impact of workforce development on the development of vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities, the purpose of the study was to:

1. Explore the need for training of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities;
2. Describe the impact of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities; and
3. Discuss the implications of workforce development through home, school, and community for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

This study was different from others in the past that have investigated the vocational interests of adjudicated African American males with disabilities. It was designed to explain how adjudicated African American males with disabilities are likely to perceive their workforce development training on developing their vocational interests. Finally, the implications of this research will be described for the juvenile justice system that serves adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities and those who may attempt to influence them to reach their career aspirations is described.

The first distinction between this study and previous investigations of vocational interest has to do with the participants who were studied. Previous research has directed its attention on White youth. There is substantial evidence that minority youth are often treated differently from majority youth within the juvenile justice system. Pope and Feyerherm (1992) found approximately two-thirds of the studies shows that racial and/or ethnic status did influence decision making within the juvenile justice system adjudication, sentencing and incarceration.

Furthermore, research demonstrates that a high proportion of African American youth in the juvenile justice system have never had a disability identified or have been misidentified (EDJJ, 1999). Consequently, many African American youth have not had access to the necessary assessments, or the

academic, vocational or psychological interventions that may have resulted in the development of suitable career interests.

A substantial amount of research has been conducted on career development. Parsons (1989) theorized that a choice of a vocation depended on (a) an accurate knowledge of yourself, (b) thorough knowledge of job specifications, and (c) the ability to make a proper match between the two. He wrote, "In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (a) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitation; (b) a thorough knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; and (c) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of acts." (p.5) Super (1990) theorized that while career patterns change as people mature, they are determined dominantly by socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics and the opportunities to which people are exposed.

The following research questions guided this study, helping to formulate, but not constrain the study of one group of African American male youth in the study:

1. Explore the need for training of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities;

2. Describe the impact of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities; and
3. Discuss the implications of workforce development through home, school, and community for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Definition of Terms

Adjudication is the legal process whereby a juvenile court judge decides, during an adjudicatory hearing, whether a child is a delinquent, a status offender, or a dependent or whether the allegation in the petition can be sustained (Finn, 1998).

Adjudicated youth is a child who has been found guilty by a judge of committing a delinquent act. The court commits the adjudicated youth tothe Texas Youth Commission control (Finn, 1998).

African American is defined as a member of a racial and ethnic minority group, partly African, with a mixed racial background.

Assessment is an evaluation procedure that requires youths to perform a task, which approximates an outcome as closely as possible within established requirements of economy, validity and reliability (Finn, 1998).

At-risk youth are those who are in danger of failing to complete their education with an adequate level of skills for independent living and entry-level job skills (Slavin & Madden, 1989). For the purpose of this study, this definition includes the following: (a) youth retained in one or more grades, (b) youths with a majority of failing grades, and (c) youths below grade level in mathematics and/or reading, (d) youths with disabilities, and (e) youth adjudicated in the Texas Youth Commission system for delinquent behavior.

Classification is a legal determination made by a court or agency official, based on statutory and agency guidelines, that identifies the category of program into which an offender is placed (Finn, 1998)

Community-based is a strategy, process or entity that serves a well-defined neighborhood or local population.

Disability refer to impairments of participants in this study, age 15 to 21, including an assessment that has determined the impairment as neurological, emotional or physical disabilities.

Entry-level employment is a job that can be held by someone who has completed secondary school education, rather than a job for someone who qualifies for it by virtue of work experience.

Intake is the initial process used for youth referred to the juvenile justice system. Intake involves screening each youth to determine the appropriateness of detention, release, or referral to a diversionary program or agency for unofficial or

non-judicial handling; for medical, psychological, psychiatric, substance abuse, or educational problems; or for other conditions that may have caused the youth to come to the attention of law enforcement or intake officers.

Internship in this study is monitored work (e.g., on-the-job training, pre-employment training, etc.) to gain work experience, to be exposed to adult role models in the work place, and to relate academic abilities to vocational interests. It includes a variety of programs, such as career exploration, work experience, career planning, and job search training.

On-the-Job Training is an entry-level job that is part of job-readiness training. This job is supervised by an adult and is performed according to minimum quality performance standards.

Soft Skills is a diverse range of abilities including the ability to communicate effectively, creativity, analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, team-building, listening skills, diplomacy, flexibility, change readiness, self-awareness (Caudron, 1999).

Vocational interest reflects five components that may be characterized as determinants: personality, motivation or drive, expression of self-concept or identification, habitability, and environmental influences [e.g., learning and socialization] (Hansen, 1990).

Workforce Development training provides activities to expand participants' knowledge of nontraditional career options, build self-esteem,

develop problem-solving and decision-making skills, and increase their awareness of the importance of making life plans.

Work experience is an entry-level job that can be held by someone who has not worked in competitive employment, attended secondary school, or participated in the summer youth program.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Most of the workforce development literature has focused on White males from middle and upper class backgrounds (Parham & Austin, 1994). Few studies have focused specifically on the development of vocational interests of incarcerated African American male youth with disabilities (Hayes & Way, 2000). However, these studies show there has been a shift in the workforce development training literature to address workforce maturity, and to assess the impact of family, situation, community, gender, socio-economic conditions, individual, psychological/emotional and societal factors on workforce development (Parham & Austin, 1994).

According to Lundberg, Osborne, and Miner (1997) workforce development maturity is defined as the readiness to make a vocational decision. The complex interaction of home, school, and community factors affects individuals' readiness to succeed in mastering the tasks appropriate to various stages of vocational interest development (Kerka, 1998). If it is true that vocational interests are influenced by family, disability situation, community, socio-economic conditions, psychological/emotional and societal factors (Kerka, 1998; Naidoo, 1998), how do these factors impact on the development of the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities? There is no simple answer to this question; however, the more research studies

that are conducted which explore these specific factors in regards to the development of vocational interests, the more effective workforce development system can be in guiding adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in the vocational development and training phases.

Parham and Austin (1994) stated that, “People’s views of themselves and the world of work are projected onto occupational titles, and in that manner who and what they are affects their career choice.” (p. 143). An integral part of whom and what African American male youth with disabilities are about may be found in their perceptions and thoughts concerning their prospective career.

Vocational Interests

Vocational interest is a process undertaken by children and adolescents to test ideas about “what I want to be when I grow up.” In a juvenile detention facility the capacity to explore vocational interest and psychological resources is an important adaptive response to an era of rapid social and economic changes (Blustein, 1997). Thus, the demand for adjudicated African American youth with disabilities to explore and pursue vocational interest in a juvenile facility is challenging. The youths are challenged by programs that prepare them for jobs and education, while also trying to meet their labor market requirements of employers, and safety and security needs of communities (Fox & Lyons, 2003).

Super (1956, 1980 & 1990; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) theorizes that influences vocational interests which, in turn, leads to a career choice, that fits the person's self defined preferences. He theorizes that people define the kind of person they are, in part, by their vocational interests. Super's approach, rather than assuming that all individuals in the same age range are in the same career stage, assumes that many factors (e.g., physical, social, and psychological) determine a person's career stage. It includes five stages; Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Decline in which individuals must master stage-specific tasks that build upon each other to prepare them for their career choice.

The Growth stage takes place from ages of 4 to 14 years old. During this stage, fantasy play and curiosity help children explore interest and abilities. The children develop an understanding of the meaning of work and begin to form a self-concept of who they are and how they differ from others. Individuals begin to develop basic skills that will equip them for work in the broader community.

Individuals making temporary decisions about careers and field of study characterize the Exploration stage, during the age of 14 to 25 years old. Throughout this stage, individuals go through trial experiences in their career of interest or areas of interest so they can decide whether they want to pursue that career or move on to something else that is a better fit for them. The adolescents increase their understanding of themselves and their abilities and begin to explore

the world of work in order to make choices that will eventually result in implementation of a vocational choice.

The Establishment stage (age 25 to 45 years old) is a time when individuals become more stable in careers, and they either are successful and advance or become frustrated. The individuals, after preparation and trial, make a commitment to an occupation area and are concerned with establishing a secure place and finding niches for themselves.

The Maintenance stage (age 45 to 65 years old) involves stagnation, revision, or innovation. The individuals are concerned to maintained status and position in one's selected occupation.

Finally, the Decline stage (65 years old and older) involves retirement or the beginning of a new specialized career or hobby (Super et. al., 1996). The individual is required to deal with issues of retirement and seek other non-vocational sources of self fulfillment.

Two stages that are particularly relevant to this study, and require additional explanation are Growth and Exploration. In the Growth stage (age 4 to 14 years old), children begin to become more concerned with their future and taking more control over their lives. They are focused on performance and achievement in school and learning soft skills such as adaptive work habits and attitudes, social skills, and time management. In the Exploration stage (age 14 to 24 years old), children begin to develop ideas about what type of work would best

suit their personality and interests. Gradually, they begin to narrow their choices until they have decided on a career path, which is followed by career planning and implementation of that plan (Super, 1963; Super et. al., 1996).

There is a consensus in the literature that vocational interests begin to develop as early as four years of age (Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Croutyer, 1984; Seligman, Weinstock, & Heflin, 1991; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Rojewski (1994) data found that adolescents from low-income backgrounds may have their development hindered by a lack of access to occupational information, role models, and the perceived lack of employment opportunities, all of which influence career choice.

In exploring vocational interest, Holland's (1997) theory of careers is a useful means of categorizing or influencing people and careers to facilitate vocational interest. Holland suggests there are six different personality types: (a) realistic- individuals are active, stable, and enjoy hands-on or manual activities such as building, mechanics, machinery operation and athletics. They prefer to work with things rather than ideas and people; (b) investigative- individuals are analytical, intellectual and observant, and enjoy research, mathematical or scientific activities; (c) artistic- individuals are original, intuitive and imaginative, and enjoy creative activities such as composing or playing music, writing, drawing or painting, and acting in or directing stage productions; (d) social- individuals are humanistic, idealistic, and responsible, and concerned with the

welfare of others and enjoy participating in group activities and helping, training, caring for, counseling or developing others; (e) enterprising- individuals are energetic, ambitious, adventurous, sociable and self confident and enjoy activities that require them to persuade others, such as sales, and seek out leadership roles; and (f) conventional-individuals are efficient, careful, conforming, organized, and conscientious, are comfortable working within an established chain of command and prefer carrying out well-defined instructions over assuming leadership roles. Holland (1997) theorized that finding a match between personality and work environment will, in the long term, facilitate achievement and tenure in a vocation. He argued that comparing the characteristics between personality and environment can be helpful in determining educational choice, job choice, and in understanding educational achievement, job stability and success, personal competence, and social behavior (Holland, 1997).

Krumboltz (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) and Holland (1997) theorized that several factors influence the development of vocational interest, including peers, genetic predispositions, parents, socio-economic class, culture, physical environment, and reinforcement histories. Likewise, there are a number of factors that influence a work environment, including physical environment, job requirements, and social environment. People seek out environments that allow them to express their vocational interest and accept challenges that are best met by people with their specific characteristics (Holland, 1997). Individuals are able

to match the sub-types (combinations of the three highest rated descriptors) with sub-types of variety of vocational interests (Holland, 1985; Holland & Gottfredson, 1992). Therefore, Holland's theory of career development and vocational interest has heuristic value that makes it a valuable tool in workforce training (Holland & Gottfredson, 1992; Osipow, 1990; Whiston, 1989) and this study.

The literature supporting Holland's theory (1997) of careers is considerable. The studies that have supported its use in workforce training about career development and vocational interest are convincing in program development and vocational testing. The literature theorizes that people are most satisfied, successful, and have longer tenure when they work in an environment that allows them to express their attitudes, values, and beliefs, and when they are able to use their personality and skills to solve work related problems effectively. Moreover, it suggests that youth who are not in a work environment that is a good fit with their vocational interest are more likely to be unhappy, less successful, and unstable (Holland. 1997).

Vocational interest is primarily a developmental task that typically occurs during adolescence. Adjudicated African American youth with disabilities have encountered difficulties negotiating this task because of limited access to educational and occupational opportunities (Chartrand & Rose, 1996; Young, 1994). There is a strong relationship between employment and delinquency; at-

risk youth employed are less likely than those who are unemployed to be arrested or committed to the state (Munson & Strauss, 1993).

Factors Contributing to Vocational Interests

One option of breaking the cycle of not developing vocational interests by adjudicated African American males with disabilities involves integrating a workforce development system within the juvenile justice system. The purpose is to eliminate the barriers that prevent adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities from successfully actualizing their vocational goals. Many juvenile justice professionals, educators, community leaders, parents and even some school systems argue that workforce development training geared toward the development of vocational interests, soft skills, and entry level employment of African American adolescent males could reverse the present trends toward failure in the educational and workforce development systems (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997).

Career Development Theory

Vocational Interest is an important element of vocational development. Through the years, it has been difficult to determine the manner in which individuals select various careers. However, career development theory helps create an understanding of the variety of ways adjudicated youth with disabilities actualize their vocational interests and make career decisions. Furthermore, it serves as a basic way to describe and discuss the development of vocational

interests. Current theories of vocational interest and career choice provide framework for future theories in vocational development.

Anne Roe, John Holland, and Donald Super are among the most noted contributors of vocational development theory. Their works are cited as foundations for new theories in vocational development. Even though none of their theories incorporate race as a major component, researchers credit them with being cognizant of race as a factor in vocational development (Parham & Austin, 1994). In addition, their studies help shape the theoretical base of this study.

Career Development Theories for African American Male Youth

Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996), Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), and Lent et al., (1996) theories offer some explanations for how the stages proposed by Super (1996) might be navigated. These theories suggest that the choices youth consider for career opportunities are a function of their vocational interests (Hansen, 1984) and their perceived self-efficacy in related activities (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Hackett, 1985).These vocational interests develop, in part, through associative and instrumental learning experiences (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Therefore, the environments to which adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are exposed provide limited opportunities for them to experience different activities that might become career areas of interest. They are differentially reinforced for pursuing and achieving different levels of success in these career developing activities. As a result, adjudicated African American male

youth with disabilities may repeatedly engage in activities that they perceive as positive or that are likely to be rewarded (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996), and will develop skills, explore career choices, and training expectations of what will result from the perception of workforce development training that an individual is skilled at soft skills, and the expectation that participating in it will bring positive outcomes (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al, 1994, 1996; Lent, Larkin, & Brown, 1989).

O'Neil, Ohlde, Toffelson, and Pigott (1980) theory of vocational influence supports the notion that the family, school, and community could serve as influences in the development of vocational interests in adjudicated African American youth with disabilities. Similarly, Roe's, Holland's and Super's theories of vocational development and the O'Neil et al. (1980) theorizes vocational development decision-making is not based on an African American vocational interest perspective. The theories are predominantly based on White high school aged youth. One should note that this study does not specifically intend to provide a complete framework for building an understanding of vocational interest for adjudicated African American youth with disabilities. It does, however, serve as a framework for investigating workforce development training in this study. Parham and Austin (1994) maintain that it is unnecessary to devise new vocational development theories based solely on African Americans. Instead they suggest existing theories can be recognized, extended, evaluated and reframed to encompass an African American perspective.

The O' Neil et al. (1980) theorized that vocational influence is based on previous theories of vocational development. Similar to Holland (1973), Roe (1957) and Super (1957), and prior to the O'Neil et al. (1980), O'Neil, Meeker and Borger (1978) develop a theory that includes 6 major factors and 22 sub-factors that affect an individual's vocational interest. This vocational influence theory postulates that individual, societal, familial, socioeconomic, situational, and psychosocial-emotional factors affect vocational influence processes.

O'Neil et al. (1978) identify the major factors of the theory as follows:

1. Familial Factors include the family's influence regarding vocational choices. It includes an individual childhood experiences as well as mother's and father's role models.
2. Individual Factors involve those things individuals expect of themselves, as well as their abilities, interests, attitudes, and need to achieve.
3. Societal Factors include the values, attitudes, and practices society places on various career choices. Educational experiences, peer group influences, and mass media depiction makes up this factor.
4. Socioeconomic Factors relate to society's economic condition, as well as social, racial and ethnic group membership. The factors include sex and age discrimination, adjudication, workforce preparation and training.

5. Situational Factors involves predictable situations that shape vocational interests. It includes the elements of chance and of taking the course of least resistance.
6. Psychological-Emotional Factors are defined as problems that can restrict, limit, or influence vocational interests. It involves the fear of failure, the fear of success, the lack of confidence, the lack of assertiveness, and role conflict (O'Neil et al., 1978).

It is necessary to develop a link between the O'Neil et al. (1978) theory of vocational influence and workforce development training on adjudicated African America youth with disabilities. In order to create an understanding of the affects of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities one must look at the education, socioeconomic, social and individual factors that affect adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities vocational interests.

This section of the literature discusses how influences shape the vocational interests of this unique population. African American youth who are incarcerated, live in poverty, and come from special needs populations tend to be influenced more by subjective indicators than objective indicators when choosing careers (Fisher & Griggs, 1995; Schulenberg, Vondracek & Crouter, 1984; Wilson & Allen, 1987). Subjective indicators for African Americans are linked with following characteristics:

1. Strong emphasis on collective work and responsibility (Karenga as cited in Riley, 1995).
2. High level of personal efficacy (Wilson & Allen, 1987).
3. Emphasis on interdependence and affective orientations (Noble, 1972; Boykin, 1983; Kimbrough & Salomone, 1983).
4. High educational aspirations (Bracey, 1992)
5. Negative perceptions of the opportunity structure (Collison, 1996).
6. Influence by significant others when choosing careers (Kunjufu, 1988).
7. The guidance of authority figures (Parham & Austin, 1994; Kimbrough & Salomone, 1993).

All the subjective factors listed are linked with aspects of the O'Neil et al. (1980) theory of career decision-making. Objective factors such as socio-economic status, IQ, and parent's occupational status have less of an influence on African Americans' career development than subjective factors (Fisher & Griggs, 1995; Kerchoff; & Campbell, 1977; Schulenberg et al., 1984).

The Origins of African American Vocational Interests

The discussion of African culture in this section provides a link to O'Neil et al (1978) vocation interest theory. Much of the culture that exists within African American society is derived from African roots. African belief systems place great influence on the values, culture, educational experiences, and learning styles of African Americans (Boykin, 1983; Herskovitz, 1958). Arguments exist

regarding the influence of African culture. Some argue that 250 years of slavery render African Americans with no distinct culture of their own (Hill, 1993). Others argue to the contrary. Herskovitz (1958) noted, "Negroes in the United States are not Africans, but they are descendants of Africans. There is no more theoretical support for the hypothesis that they have retained nothing of the culture of their African forebears, than for supposing that they have remained completely African in their behavior" (p. 145).

A strong cultural pattern that derives both from African roots and from circumstances of racism and poverty is the kin help network (Stack, 1975). Explanations of the kin help network are necessary to understand the notion of interdependence, desires for collective work, and other attributes that are linked with African American culture in poor communities, low performing schools, and high unemployment (Karenga cited in Riley, 1995, 1995; Nobles, 1972). An understanding of the kin help network is also necessary for understanding how the familial, societal, and socioeconomic factors identified by O'Neil et al. (1978) may affect the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Stack (1975) found that the kin help network is an extended cluster of people related through children, marriage, and friendship. The kin help network continues throughout African American families (Burlew, Banks, McAdoo & Azibo, 1992; King, 1976). Ties, typically formed among women, are used to rally

the domestic functions of feeding, clothing, and child care. The kin help network consists of immediate family members, extended family members, neighbors, teachers, and ministers who work together to assure the survival and well-being of families within the community. It represents a pattern of interlocking mutual relationships that extend beyond family bonds. Families live in separate domestic units that function independently but are linked by an arrangement of shared help. The kin help network provides a strong explanation of the desire for interdependence and collective work found among African Americans (Riley, 1995). Without the kin help networks, high levels of interdependence, and collective work ideals, Africans Americans would have been unable to overcome the economical and social injustices they historically have endured in the United States (Burlew et al., 1992).

According to psychologist Madge Willis (cited in Burlew et al., 1992), high levels of interdependence are based on a pattern of cooperation that exists among African Americans. Cooperation, sharing, and working together are behaviors that have become survival strategies for African Americans in schools and workplace discrimination. Interdependence among African Americans is also a carryover from African society, where cooperation and communal life are social norms. These explanations can be linked to aspects of the socioeconomic factor identified in the O'Neil et al. (1978) theory.

Parham and Austin (1994) discussed works regarding value orientations of African Americans. They determined that a great commonality exists among authors researching this topic. Parham and Austin (1994) found that African Americans are more prone to collective work and group orientations. Also African Americans tend to be interdependent rather than competitive, affectively oriented rather than logically oriented, and relationship oriented rather than task oriented. Furthermore, they traced these findings to African principles fostered by Karenga (Karenga cited in Riley, 1995).

Hassler and Reiskin (1995) found that values motivated multi-cultural youth to choose careers, also found that most youths of color seek careers that allow them to be challenged and to help others. The notion of shared help is cited as a reason African American historically accord high rank and status to educators (Marable, 1993). As time passes, however, other professions are becoming more highly regarded than teaching (Irvine, 1988).

Identifying Factors that Affect the Vocational Development of Vocational Interests of Adjudicated African American Males with Disabilities

Familial Factors

Hill (1992), Lee (1996), Mincy (1994), Thompson (1994) and Willis (1990) theorized that the family is the institution that serves as the primary source of developing vocational interest for adolescents including those with disabilities. It is the family where children and adolescents receive nurturing and support.

Values, norms, morals, and beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation during the familial vocational process. Major and Billson (1992), Prince (1997) and Warfield-Coppock (1992) agree with Willis (1990) argument that in the African American family, nurturance and support is joined by the Afro centric instructions of a committed love of the family, mutual respect, communal cooperation and responsibility, and the formation of vocational interest.

Lovett-Tisdale (1966) and McCollum (1997) findings identify African American families as heterogeneous, and not homogeneous. They tend to be made up of single parent household rather than two parent household, and an extended family which spans all socioeconomic tiers and geographical regions in the United States.

Helms (1989), Lee (1996), Stevenson, (1993) and Thompson (1994) theorized that a strong racial identity will assist adjudicated African American youth with disabilities to formulate vocational interests during their adolescent transitional time. They suggest it is imperative that a strong racial identity is formed during the vocational development process. A strong racial identity can be formed by instilling racial pride in the rich heritage of African Americans during the workforce development training process in the workforce training in juvenile justice facilities. Establishing racial pride will assist adjudicated African American male youths with disabilities to formulate vocational interests despite

the societal message of inferiority and pathology experienced in the juvenile justice system (EDJJ, 1999).

Plummer (1996) used a demographic survey to test the acquisition of racial identity of young African American males. She theorizes that adolescent African American males reported reaching the immersion and internalization stages of the Black Racial Identity Attitude scale. The immersion stage is characterized by integrating oneself with an Africentric approach. Some participants indicated endorsing the internalization stage because of influences of Africentric socialization. During this time youth strive to discover who they are as a person and to understand them by exploring such activities as truancy, hang with peers, developing romantic interests, their true personal characteristics as they effect their development of vocational interests maybe delayed.

Wilson, Kohn, Curry-El and Hinton (1995) found that the parenting style of the African American family may affect the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. Of the three parenting styles tested, authoritarian, authoritative and permissive, African American families adhere to an authoritative parenting style. The Family Environment Scale and the Parent Authority Questionnaire argued that African American families utilize a democratic authoritative parenting style where family rules are circumstantially subject to revision. The parenting style propose that African American parents are more concerned with children learning the concepts of having rules and adhering

to family rules, than blindly following rules without a thorough understanding of the purpose of the rules.

The development of vocational interests through the African American family was not solely the responsibility of the nuclear family, but it was shared with the extended family including the surrounding community (Lovett-Tisdale et al., 1996; Prince, 1997). Because of disproportionate placement of African American male youth in the juvenile justice system, the extended family plays a vital role in assisting in the development of vocational interests of males. Although the biological father might be absent, male socialization continues to promote vocational development because of the presence of alternative males, namely grandfathers, uncles, cousins, and ministers (Gray-Ray & Ray, 1990; White & Parham, 1990).

Gray-Ray and Ray (1990) conducted a study to connect African American juvenile delinquency with inadequate parental supervision and control because of single parent households. Results of this study confirmed that single family homes did not contribute to the delinquency of the youths. The over reliance of the extended family can be credited to assisting low income and welfare mothers supervise their children. The resilience of the single African American family is further supported in the fact that some low income African American females are credited as valuing motherhood more than being a wife (Gray-Ray & Ray, 1990).

Although African American female headed households do not readily contribute to juvenile delinquency, the literature on adolescent African American males indicates that males are definitely needed to transform African American young males into working men. They become role models and teachers of character development and peer relations. Willis (1990) suggests that "only an African American man can teach an African American boy how to be a man." (p. 105). Willis (1990) argues that adult male nurturance and guidance are beneficial to role modeling and create positive identification for the adolescent African American male when it is received constructively from an adult African American male in workforce development training.

Education

The public educational system has a secondary effect on the vocational development of adolescent African American males (Warfield-Coppock, 1992). For African American males with disabilities the ethical, social, political and cultural dimensions factors are issues to overcome (Thomas, 2002). Mincy (1994), Taylor (1990) and Taylor, Casten, Flukinger, Robert, and Fulmore (1994) join Willis (1990) in arguing that for African American male youth to succeed in the society, acquiring an education is very important. Specifically, high school is acknowledged as a central organizing experience for African American male youth. During this period, African American male youth are vocationally inspired

by interaction between the African American male youth, the adult administration/faculty and fellow high school students.

Brookins (1996), Gill (1992), Harris (1995), Joseph (1996), Kunjufu (1990), Mincy (1994), Walker and Sutherland (1993), and Willis (1990) found that public school records indicated that a disproportionate number of African American male youth are placed in special education or remedial classes. Drawing a parallel, the juvenile justice system has disproportionate number of adjudication and coordination of care of African American youth in juvenile facilities (Office of Juvenile Justice Disability Programs, 2002). Forty percent of African American youths with disabilities are arrested after leaving school and three-quarters of African American youths are not employed two years out of school compared to 47 percent of White American youths with disabilities (Edelman, 2004). Several authors agree that the over abundance of African American male youth in special education, remedial academic tracks and excessive disciplinary referral is attributed to the low academic expectations of teachers and administrators in public schools and is reflected in the juvenile justice systems (Oakes, 1985). Poor academic performance and excessive discipline problems are attributed to the boredom that some young African American males experience from a perceived irrelevant educational and vocational training curriculum (OJJDP, 2002). Additional reason for performance and discipline problems are that race matters in the U.S. (West, 1993), especially

in schooling (Barona & Garcia, 1990; Hilliard, 1993; Kohl, 1994). Why race matters is unclear (Fernandez, Bebob, Messam, Stepick, 1998). They found in some literature performance and discipline is indicative of family structure and educational aspiration.

Joseph (1996), Walker (1993) and Warfield-Coppock (1992) argued that the public educational system has been dysfunctional and out of touch in its educational and vocational development of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. The American public education system and the workforce development system are defined as a White American middle-class institution, tailored for the White American middle class and not germane to the vocational interests of African American male youth. This thought is supported by the lack of effort to incorporate the achievement and experiences of African Americans in the workforce development training curriculum, sending a negative message toward young African American males about the importance of their educational and workforce development (Ogbu, 1978, 1988). Ogbu (1978, 1988) theorize that American society imposes a job ceiling that excludes African Americans from employment mobility through normal channels of education. In response, African American youth develop an adversarial attitude toward education in response to derogatory images projected on them in dominant White American population.

Church

Adhering to strong spiritual beliefs has crossed generational lines as an important component of the African American community (Hill, 1995; Moore, 1994; Morris, 1997). Researchers have found that spirituality had an integral role in the daily lives of native Africans. The reliance on the spiritual realm was not a separate entity with the native Africans. The interconnectedness of the spirit world with daily activities of African Americans is described as cosmology and ontology. Cosmology reflects the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things that originated from the creator. Ontology is the belief that the Supreme Being creates the spiritual forces in all things which present value in the essence of being. Consequently, the concept of humankind and nature are that one has been inherited from the native African to the beliefs of the African American community. Also included in the African world view, is the belief that the Supreme Being connects the living with the dead (Hill, 1995).

Music, literature, and various mediums of the arts composed by African Americans reflect the stability of spiritualism within the African American community (Hill, 1995). Morris (1997) found that historians Frazier and Herskowitz validated that African Americans have retained their African spiritual ancestry. Historically, the African American church has served as the institution that served as the primary source for maintaining spirituality in the African American community.

Morris (1997) theorized that adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities with high spirituality had the following characteristics: a positive outlook about themselves; confidence about their ability to solve their own problems; honesty in their relationships; ability to work hard to accomplish a task; leadership qualities; ability to be cooperative; willingness to share their material possessions with others; giving and receiving affection and care; the perception that others are willing to help them; the perception that others are willing to protect them; enjoying the company of others; and receiving respect from others. In a similar manner adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities may develop vocational interests when spiritual involvement will foster high self esteem and security to pursue their career aspirations (Moore, 1994).

Psychological-Emotional Factors

To assess the psychological-emotional factors that affect the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities, this section will recognize those factors that contribute to an unhealthy mental status of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities on the development of identity (Santrock, 1987). It is the development of vocational interest that is often confused or delayed due to being in their individual identity without emphasis placed on vocational development or within a dominant culture that often devalues or does not support their way of being. Adjudicated African American male with disabilities have historically suffered from the negative

stereotypes of mainstream society (Bennett, 1993; Coleman, Jussin & Kelly, 1995; & Douglass, 1993). Douglass (1993) found that adjudicated African American male youth have been described as undisciplined thugs, intellectually inferior and criminals. Some Whites believe the stereotypes about the African American males which can cause feelings of fear about adjudicated African American male youth. Burnette (1995) argues other stereotypes directed toward adjudicated African American male youth include those popularized in the media that all African American male youth are drug dealers, gang members and juvenile delinquents.

In understanding of this reaction, White and Parham (1990) found that the inferiority theory affects the psychological-emotional development of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. This model suggests that adjudicated African American male youth are inferior to Whites. It also suggests that this belief was used when professionals in the workforce development profession provided workforce development training to at-risk youth. White and Parham support this belief by indicating that prior to conducting and publishing valid research about the African American population this negative force persisted (Murray, 1995).

Individual Factors

Increasingly research is focused on how individual factors affect the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the media does not readily publicize the adjudicated African American male youth who have successfully mastered the vocational development process. Burnette (1995) results of the study found that 90 % of African American male youth are positive young men who attend school and are active in their community which is contradictory to other perceptions of African American youth. Although Fordham (1988, 1996) extends the argument through her demonstration that some African American youths manage to maintain a positive academic orientation and become high achievers.

Developing a vocational interest for African American youth often means overcoming barriers or breaking stereotypes and matriculating in professional schools despite the media and mainstream portrayal of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities as endangered species. Morris (1997) results indicate those adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are capable of academic and vocational success. This allows for some understanding of success that youth can obtain when supported by home, school and communities. She was able to gather this information through observing African American youth in a training program for pre-med students. Her study generalized for adjudicated African American youth that diligence to excel was not reflective of the drop-out, unemployment or juvenile delinquency often popularized about adjudicated African American youth in the media. Barbarin (1993) theorized that the adjectives of competent, altruistic, resourceful, creative,

aspiring, motivated and spiritual are missing when describing adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. It appears that the juvenile justice system doe not appear interested in investigating those adjudicated African American male youth whose families are emotionally supportive and nurturing despite their court involvement. Little research attention is given to those situations where a positive vocational identity has been formed, where workforce development is encouraged despite the uncertainty of entry-level employment or pursues their vocational interest or refuse to continue in the juvenile justice system. The lack of positive reinforcement may contribute to low self esteem and the inability to pursue their vocational interests. This may be fostered by fear, the unknown and lack of vocational success by people around these youths.

Overall, Majors and Billson (1995) found a 90 % success rate for African American male youth in society; one can assume that the remaining 10 % are negatively influenced. As a result, the overall disproportionate placement of African American male youth in the juvenile justice system and the low participation by them in vocational education programs (Arnold & Levesque, 1992). Furthermore, they determined that the African American male youth vocational transition can be negatively influenced by the effects of peer pressure, low self-esteem, incarceration, and the stigmatizing affects of court involvement and disability.

Establishing a context for consideration of the future of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in their workforce development training is hampered by the increase in juvenile arrests of this population during the past decade—driven by arrests for violent crimes—raising concerns in light of the projected 30 percent increase in the number of 15- to 16-years-olds by 2010 (OJJDP, 2002). This report that the increase in juvenile crimes since the mid-1980 reflects several trends in this country: shifts in the economy, the decline in the extended family and increase in single parenthood.

Gray-Ray and Ray (1990), and Kunjufu (1990) theorizes that the weakening bonds of the overall family structure can affect the stability within the personal development of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. The Africa American community has been neglectful in providing a safety net, rooted in the West African proverb of it takes an entire village to raise a child was in place to assist in vocational development of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities when the family and the school failed to provide nurturance. This activity exerts negative effects on individuals' own well-being (e.g., anger, cynicism, and reduced satisfaction).

Although evidence clearly shows that the past fifty years have brought tremendous educational, economic, and social gains for African American people as a whole, equally clear is that progress toward educational parity for most African American youth has slowed. Large disparities in educational outcomes

still persist between ethnic, cultural, and language diverse groups, and by some indicators, educational gaps have widened in recent years (Tidwell, 2000). Ogbu and Wilson (1990) argued that a shortcoming to vocational development within the inner city African American community or adjudicated African American youth with disabilities is the absence of a strong African American middle class. The African American middle class is the institution within the African American community that provides positive images, professions, and role models. Taylor (1990) found the increase of African American youth in the inner cities. It suggested that the increase of 56 % had an exponential effect on certain social problems within the inner city African American community. With this increase, there is competition for available African American male role models (Barbarin, 1993; De La Cancela, 1993; Fulmore et al., 1994; Nelson 1995; Gray-Ray & Ray, 1990; Jagers & Mock, 1993; Jones, 1993; LaPoint, 1992; Nelson, 1985; Ogbu & Wilson 1990; Parker & Lord, 1993; Richardson, 1992; Smith & Brookins, 1997; Spencer, 1991; Taylor, 1990; Taylor et al., 1994; Walker & Sutherland, 1993). Gray-Ray and Ray (1990) found that the absence of African American father, African American male teachers and African American entrepreneurs are being replaced by unemployed or marginal employed African American males. This bleak vocational outlook promotes a poor self concept, and little vocational vision. The impact is made worse by a lack of counseling to encourage academic and vocational achievement, and the need to have African American entry-level

employment skills validated by the overly available negative influences brought on the behavior and disproportionate placement of African American male youth in the criminal justice facilities throughout the country.

Absence of Information on the Workforce Development of African American Youth

In the early 1990's African Americans and White Americans were enrolling in different types of vocational programs (Arnold & Levesque, 1992). African American students with and without disabilities were under-represented in vocational training programs that led to higher-level occupations and over represented in those that trained for low-level or dead-end jobs. Conversely, while many existing career development theories are derived from the research on predominantly White middle-class Americans, often they have been used to describe the career patterns of minorities (racial/ethnic groups) in the United States. This tendency to generalize from the dominant group has created a limited and misguided view of the constructs that shape the career profiles of African American students (Fisher & Griggs, 1995). With this research, it has been assumed that the factors that predict the career development and selection of White students are applicable predictors for minority students as well (Jones, 1989). The increasing number of people from diverse ethnic and racial groups entering the workforce makes it crucial that African Americans acquire a clear understanding of their career identity, which includes interests, work values,

knowledge of occupations, perceptions of career options and career decision-making strategies. Griggs, Copeland and Fisher (1992) study found that the at-risk students, who do not do well academically need ethnic, racial and same sex vocational role models in their instructional materials, work settings, and other culturally relevant learning experiences. For this to occur, more investigations must be directed toward examining the unique influences that one's culture and ethnicity have on the career development process (Fisher & Griggs, 1995).

The few studies that have included minority populations and population with disabilities theorize that there are distinct differences among culture groups in the type of factors that predict their respective career development patterns (Johnson, 1992; Kerchoff & Crouter, 1984; Smith, 1983; Wilson & Allen, 1987). Fisher and Griggs (1995) theorizes that career development profiles of the dominant culture tend to be influenced by objective factors (i.e., SES, intelligence quotient, family occupational status), that is different from the career development of minorities who are influenced more by subjective indicators (i.e., personal efficacy, educational aspirations, perception of opportunity structure, and the influence and support of significant others). Other indicators often suggest that African American children see themselves as of low status. As Katz (1988) points out, if children were not considered low status, calling a grown women a girl or an African American man a boy would not be regarded as insulting (p. 194). Some young people also recognize that because of some distinguishing

characteristic about them, their race, gender or some other attribute, they may be viewed as less capable, less intelligent, less virtuous and, as a result of this bias, they may be treated by some people as less than for their entire lives which may influence their vocational interest and choice (Montgomery, 1993).

Some studies, for example, found African Americans prefer and do better in communal learning settings, while White Americans prefer and do better in competitive learning settings (Boykin, in press). Societal influence suggests that there are cumulative, interactive effects between vocational risk factors and resources. Krumboltz's (1990) social learning theory of career development builds on the work of Bandura (1977) and theorizes that behaviors are largely influenced by the social learning experiences one derives from environmental conditions and events. Furthermore, one's education and career opportunities are mediated by genetic endowment and situations that are outside of personal control, such as sociopolitical issues and economic decision (Fisher & Griggs, 1994).

The unique challenge of adjudicated African American youth with a disability, who are, have failed in school, and have no experience in the workforce is formidable and includes distorted vocational aspirations, serious work attitude problems, and ongoing job searches are many. Work is an important medium for overcoming many of the obstacles encountered by these young people. A combination of work and school (i.e., an entry level job and participation in

vocational development) can prove to be an effective bridge from school into the world of work (West, 1987; Wehman, 1991).

The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship (1988) reported the inequities experienced by non-college bound youth. These youth often found low paying dead-end jobs. One approach to improve the employability of poor youth was to teach them trades (Eckert & Marshall, 1983; Katz, 1971). Many African American youth have been subjected to the inherent long term practice of placing youth with disabilities in vocational tracking programs because of skin color and economic status (Oakes, 1985). Oakes (1985) found that for many students without special needs, the path from school to college is clearly marked; comparable vocational routes for the African American youth who are adjudicated and have a disability are not clear and defined. Studies document the failure of juvenile correctional institutions to provide adequate services and diagnosis to young people with disabilities (Leone & Meiel, 1997, 2000). Whatever the original motive for tracking might have been, many African Americans charge that tracking stifles academic engagement and perpetuates social inequalities (Oakes, 1985).

Blakemore (1998) explains that imprisonment and high unemployment exist among African American male youth, in part, because as these youth re-enter the workforce, they are likely to have fewer skills than when they first entered juvenile justice system because of poor educational and job market

experience (Buck, 2000). Elliott (1992), and Laub and Simpson (1993) have found that meaningful, gainful employment correlates significantly with youthful offenders maturing out of delinquent behavior as they age into young adulthood, effectively wiping out differences in the rates at which whites and African American commit violent behavior as young adults. Also, Duster (1987; 1995) argues that the disproportionate number of African American youth, who are both unemployed and involved in the criminal justice system to be no accident, which mans a difficult transition to employment. Youth who are detained in juvenile facilities are already disadvantaged relative to their peers. Many incarcerated African American youth are marginally literate or illiterate and have only limited basic math skills. More than one-third of such youth have reading skills below the fourth grade level. At the end of their term most teens are released back to their communities and if their educational lag has not been addressed they remain unskilled and undereducated (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2001).

The shift in the workforce from manufacturing jobs traditionally located in the inner cities populated by African Americans, to service sectors jobs increasingly located in suburbs populated by Whites, has led to a potentially permanent underclass (Duster, 1987). Duster (1987) theorizes that the future of youth employment efforts must be in the creation of programs, which provide clear, long-term linkages into growing careers. His review, a major report on employment and training programs by the U.S. Department of Labor, perhaps put

it best: The limited evaluation evidence that is available suggests that temporary employment programs without additional services bring little or no post-program benefits to adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

The research and experimentation with employment and training programs over the ensuing years suggest a more complex picture of the relationship between youth employment and delinquency. There is strong evidence in a macro sense from the results of work by researchers Currie and Freeman (1995) that there is a connection between poverty, unemployment and at-risk behavior. Yet it cannot be said that all employment or all jobs have a salutary effect on at-risk behavior. Still, there is ample research that connects meaningful employment with better outcomes for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Workforce Training Programs

Youth offenders are confined in institutions, which generally give more emphasis to rehabilitation than do adult correctional facilities. Education and workforce training programs frequently fit into a broad array of habilitation and rehabilitation services generally. As the research suggests, few systemic efforts have been undertaken to identify the key elements of programs that effectively prepare adjudicated youth for economic self-sufficiency. Public and private institutions have usually focused on preventive and crisis intervention measures designed to mitigate the societal costs of juvenile crime and at risk behavior, rather than exploring how to more effectively habilitate, rehabilitate, and

reintegrate these adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities so they can become productive members of society. In contrast too many programs within the juvenile justice system, youth development programs are guided by a comprehensive system of operating principles that view youth and their needs in holistic terms (Brown, DeJesus, Maxwell & Schiradi, 2000). The support system includes factors external motivation such as the encouragement and/or high expectation by the counselor or trainer; significant adult relationship with an influential adult out of the home; positive use of time involvement in productive activities during their incarceration; and acknowledgement by others in terms of recognition or measurable accomplishment.

Many workforce development programs are restructuring to more effectively equip youth with the necessary academic, vocational and work readiness skills, as well as the life skills and development opportunities that will enable their successful transition to adulthood and careers. These programs are increasingly reflecting the consensus emerging from both research and practice that preparing youths for careers and adult roles requires more than the narrow range of training-related services commonly provided by youth employment and training programs (Brown et. al., 2000), Their research also revealed that the new wave of workforce development training programs are grounded in an assets-based approach that stresses youths' strengths and works to empower youth, instead of focusing on their perceived deficits. Some of the key program elements

that show the core principles of youth development include mentoring, community services, leadership development, positive peer-centered activities and long-term follow-up and supports.

Many State governments provide a range of resources and services that can be accessed by juvenile offenders; if the opportunities are identified and mutually beneficial, interagency agreements can be drawn. Workforce training for employment can be seen as a contributor of pro-social bonds and institutions in a community with high youth unemployment with higher pay-offs if successful (Wilson, 1996).

Also, workforce development training has been studied for the effectiveness of mainstream job training (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and Job Training Partnership Act programs); welfare to work; experimental; job training for specific population groups; and specific services. Special attention was paid to the patterns of benefits over time, variability in program effectiveness, and the cost/benefits of job training. The following factors were considered as alternative explanations for the modest effects of job training: small programs yielding small effects; the mistaken strategy of job training; poor quality of job-related training; deep ignorance of good pedagogy; local political interference; low placement rates; “one-shot” job training and the links to other programs; labor market factors; special problems of youth programs; and the impossibility of “second-chance” programs; labor elements included in the 1994

School-to-Work Opportunities Act were concluded to provide a vision for guiding job training program: inclusion of academic instruction, vocational skill integrated with academics (or remedial) instruction, and work-based education coordinated with instruction through "connecting activities", connection of all programs in a hierarchy of education and training opportunities; and use of applied teaching methods and team teaching strategies (Norton, 1994).

Workforce development training's primary focus is on the broader array of work skills- essential for success in finding and retaining employment, rather than on the skills required to complete a specific job. It involves training designed to assist youths to locate work-using skills that may fit the individuals' vocational interest. This training may include employers providing critical information about local and regional labor market needs and worker preparation requirements, and designing treatment plans, academic pursuits, vocational training, and the labor market (Office of Juvenile Justice Department and Prevention, 2000). The Workforce Development Act of 1995 allowed States considerable flexibility in the allocation of funds between vocational education and job training; to eliminate eligibility on the basis of unemployment or disadvantaged status; emphasize accountability and use of performance standards; require that states make information on available services easily accessible and maintain a labor market information service; allow for use of vouchers so that adults can choose providers,

and include provisions for the use of block grant money for economic development (Reville & Klerman,1995).

Carnevale and Desrochers (1998) found workforce development's emphasized providing persons with general employability skills such as resume writing, dress, teamwork and specific skills, rather than with specific job skills required for success in a given occupation (i.e., workforce readiness training versus a high technology worker). Grubb, Badway, Bell and Chi (1999) found that it is taught in a short time and focuses on a relatively job-specific occupational preparation. With this training the job seeker is provided customized services and reflects standard youth development principles rather than just a job. For example, workforce training involves providing a broad array of job skills such as hands-on tasks required for work (i.e., computer training, dress for success classes, etc.) assessment and generic work skills with minimal training in an industry. With African American male youth with disabilities placement in a facility the only viable training will be with soft skills training and post-secondary preparation. Their research found that many adjudicated youth do not have skills to enable them to find employment. Some will have better success in the labor market than others and will qualify for jobs where work experience and employer-provided training will further income mobility. However, a significant proportion of recipients have skills, limiting their prospects to jobs with low earnings and few skill-building opportunities.

There are several types of workforce development training programs for adjudicated youths with disabilities that centered on employment and training such as one-stop centers, Job Corps, Youth Apprenticeship, and School-to-Work (Buck, 2000). These programs provide vocational, educational and workforces training for inmates and during post release juvenile offenders are referred to a local workforce center, where assessment specialists work with the ex-offenders and their parole officers to find employment (Finn, 1998). While this is a promising strategy, little attention has been given to seeking greater understanding of how adjudicated African American youth with disabilities within juvenile justice systems throughout the country can meet the difficult challenge of developing their vocational interests. According to literature developing vocational interest is a necessary antecedent to obtaining and retaining employment.

The workforce development system generally refers to a broad range of employment and training services whose purpose is to enable job seekers, students, and employers to access a wide range of information about jobs, the labor market, careers, education and training organization, financing options, skills standards or certification requirements, and needed support services (Martinson, 1999). Martiinson (1999) found there is not currently one typical workforce development system. The research describes the vocabulary by which

this emerging system is described varies; sometimes, state officials refer to it simply as training, sometimes as vocational education and training (or VET), and increasingly as workforce development.

Because workforce development training programs have developed in largely unplanned and uncoordinated way (Grubb et. al., 1999) the boundaries of the system are unclear. Some efforts are essentially private and outside of government, responsibility for these training efforts include firms who are responsible for their own employees; some are private, but weakly regulated such as training offered by propriety schools such as , computer skills, soft skills and post secondary preparation. There is substantial overlap between workforce development and education, particularly in community colleges, technical institutes, and area/community vocational schools that participate in both.

Once the policy or initiative is inaugurated, the next step is functional implementation. The simple problem of systems not connecting or not understanding each other is a major reason for the lack of collaboration between the juvenile justice and workforce development systems (Brown et. al., 2000). Many State juvenile justice agencies provide employment and training services. Unfortunately, the content and quality of these services vary tremendously within and among State systems. The variation is due, in part, to the disconnection of the juvenile justice system, the State workforce development systems, and the Federal

youth employment and training system, administered through the Employment and Training Administration (OJJP, 2000).

Bushway (1996) argues that workforce development training programs tended to have fewer resources, and the evaluations have weaker designs. Liber and Mawhorr (1995) used matched control groups to assess the impact of the Second Chance Program on youth who were in court but not yet sentenced to an institution. Second Chance involves 16 weekly group meetings aimed at developing certain social skills, along with a pre-employment training program (including how to conduct an independent job search, interviews for a job and demonstrate good work habits). With 85 program entrants (only 57 of whom completed it), the test does not have much statistical power. The findings showed no significant differences in official arrests; the control group actually showed lower recidivism than the experimental group (completers or dropouts). Again the evaluation pointed to the lack of treatment integrity.

The SCANS report (1992) found that workforce training is a way of helping youth relate work and education. Its recommendation involves a partnership effort involving the workforce system, school and the broader community. Workforce and education representatives of workforce systems talk about how they follow workers or participate in guiding experiential learning by pupils about the occupations, private sector resource persons visiting classrooms to talk to students, reduction of occupational bias and stereotyping, which

hampers how at-risk youth enters the job market, developing strategies for productive work habits, and positive work values. Of course, for adjudicated African American youth with disabilities, many will not be going to college, or get a high paying job, and find it difficult to make any direct connection between workforce development and their future.

The adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities desires the most ordinary of successes: entry-level employment, the chance to realize their vocational interests and provide for his family, a second chance to help shape their vocational direction and prepare for their future (Majors & Billson, 1992). These youths wants the opportunity to shape and improve his life and the lives of those he loves. It is evident that there are many issues that must be addressed regarding the successful inclusion of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities to place them in mainstream American educational and vocational systems. Although it is a minority of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities who are non-respondent to treatment, the statistics they create distract and directly influence workforce development training success.

Employment and Training for Incarcerated African American with Disabilities Upon Release

For adjudicated African American males youth with disabilities released from the juvenile justice system, who have left school or are struggling with a weak educational credentials and have poor early work experience, a variety of second chance programs have been developed to train them and help with employment placement such as the Project RIO-Y program. Freeman (1996) research found that many programs, such as those funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (now becoming the Workforce Investment Act) are modestly successful with improving outcomes for adults (particularly women), but are ineffective among youth (LaLonde, 1995).

American Youth Policy Forum on Issues Affecting At-Risk and Out-of-School Youth (1999) met to explore and discuss issues affecting a specific population of young people and their needs. These are young people who are largely undereducated and unskilled, who are not currently in school or in jobs and are seeking opportunities to further their education and prepare for the workforce. The approximately ten million 18 to 24 years old who neither completed high school nor continue their formal education beyond high school graduation have been forgotten (Halperin, 1998).

In addition, there is little rigorous evaluation evidence of the effects of various strategies for providing better information to students or for offering college or employment rewards for good school behavior (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990a; Betsey et al., 1985). The following theory appears valid: More effective programs will require a comprehensive approach that begins in the middle grades. This includes more college preparation information to the student with personalized guidance services on college and career opportunities and requirements (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990b) and an incentive program. In addition to programs that equip youth to meet academic standards with strong prior preparation and provide extra help along the way when needed, schools can find better ways to recognize youth academic success when it occurs. Research indicates that methods to measure and reward individual youth's growth and improvement are practical and have strong effects on youth motivation and teachers' positive expectation for adjudicated learners (Maclver, 1991).

Therefore, few workforce development programs are structured to effectively equip adjudicated African American youth with disabilities with the necessary academic, vocational and work readiness skills, as well as the life skills and development opportunities that will enable their successful impact on vocational interest. These programs are increasingly reflecting the consensus emerging from both research and practice that preparing youth for careers and adult roles requires more than the narrow range of training-related services

commonly provided by youth employment and training programs. This literature of workforce development training programs are grounded in an assets- and community-based approach that stresses youths' strength and work to empower youth to seek out their vocational interest, instead of focusing on their perceived deficits. Some of the key workforce development efforts that reflect the core principles of vocational development include community, positive peer-centered activities, employment, supportive wage and supports.

Summary

There is an abundance of literature demonstrating that adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities lack specific employability skills, which reduces their chances for success in the workforce. However, there is empirical evidence that these deficits in workforce development can be remedied through environment-sensitive assessment and workforce development training. There is also a large quantity of information about second-chance employment training programs and about adjudicated African Americans male youth with disabilities lack of success in acquiring vocational skills or employment. Yet, there is a critical shortage of literature on how adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities can develop their interests through workforce development training. A survey of the literature also reveals little on the vocational interests of this population or on successful career development methods that can be used to enhance vocational interests.

This qualitative study focuses on the perception of the affects of workforce development training on the vocational interests of 10 adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities incarcerated in two juvenile justice institutions. These adjudicated African American male youths with disabilities involvement in a workforce development training programs will be investigated with particular emphasis on the influence of these youth's vocational attitudes and values. Recognizing that the literature indicates the social context in which training take place includes school, family, and community settings, the intended outcome of this study is to identify factors which can be replicated in those settings to affect the vocational interests of other adjudicated youth.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to explore the need for training of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities; describe the impact of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities; and discuss implication of workforce development through home, school, and community for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

In this methodology chapter the researcher will describe the research paradigm used in this study, and discuss the emergent nature of this naturalistic design to develop a better understanding of the influences that contribute to the development of the vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youths with disabilities.

Why This Study is Suited to Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is research broadly defined as "any kind of research that produces findings, not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Where quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek, instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. Alternatively, qualitative analysis results in a

different type of knowledge. In this study the researcher attempts to identify the knowledge youth use to interpret vocational experience and mold their behavior within the context of their workforce development training constituted environment.

Patton (1990) advocates "a paradigm of choices that seeks methodological appropriateness, as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality. This will allow for a situational responsiveness that is strict adherence to one paradigm or another will not" (p. 39). Strauss and Corbin (1990) found that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. They can also be used to obtain a new perspective on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Thus, qualitative methods are appropriate to use in situations where one needs to identify the variables that might, be tested at a later time quantitatively, or where the researcher has determined that quantitative measures cannot adequately describe or interpret a situation. Given the nature of this research an interpretive or qualitative method was employed to study the effects of workforce development training on the vocational interests as reported by adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. What makes this approach interpretive is the substantive focus on the workforce development program and the population. In order to understand how adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities perceive workforce development training a

qualitative approach seems better suited.

The ability of qualitative data to describe a phenomenon is an important methodological as well as theoretical consideration: “If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120). In this study qualitative research is used because it generally interprets phenomena rich with detail as it provides insight into adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities’ experiences of the world.

Interpretative research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994); it attempts to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign them (Boland, 1985, 1991; Deetz, 1996; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Klein & Myers, 1999). For example, this qualitative study, guided by naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1991), will involve 10 adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities who were interviewed during or after their workforce development training period. The research method employed in this study drew from the methodological orientation of Miles and Huberman (1985) who are explicit about the use of a priori frameworks to guide the gathering of the data. The framework chosen to guide this research was the model for the perceptions of the affects of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities

has been described earlier. This approach is a guide to keep the researcher focused.

This study was designed to identify, understand, and explain their perception of the affects of workforce development training on adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities who were incarcerated in a Texas facility and participated in the Project Re-Integration of Offenders-Youth (RIO-Y) program. It was intended to examine, using naturalistic methods, how layers of recurring themes and relationships among the various aspects of home, school, community and training were manifested. The naturalistic inquirer operates under a set of assumptions different from the positivist inquirer concerning the nature of reality, epistemology, and generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The intent is to develop shared constructions that illuminate a particular context and provide working hypotheses for the investigation of others (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). With this approach the researcher was allowed to be exploratory and openly code the data, and involve considerable time in the facilities and training rooms.

Qualitative methodology is appropriate for research that attempts to describe and to understand education and training phenomena (Wilson, 1977). This study endeavored to better understand and describe a relatively new phenomenon, workforce development for African American youth, using qualitative method tools to observe, investigate, and document the environment in

which the learning occurs (Creswell, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wilson, 1977). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) claim qualitative methods provide rich, descriptive data regarding the experience of the participants.

For this study, a qualitative or phenomenological paradigm was deemed appropriate for a study of workforce development training and vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities, and individualized experiences and voices. The phenomenological paradigm employs naturalistic inquiry to inductively and holistically understand participants experience in the home, school and community context-specific settings (Patton, 1990, p. 37). It recognizes the researchers as the instrument, taking into account the experiences and perspectives of the researcher as valuable and meaningful to the study of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It relies on qualitative methods, which capture a more complete picture of the participants' experience instead of a narrow perspective of generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through the interviews and establishing themes. The study employs inductive data analysis to provide an understanding of the interaction of mutually shaping influences by the participants and to explicate the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.40). It allows for the emergent design of the study, because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple

realities to devise the design adequately and because the diverse perspectives and values systems of researcher and participant interact in unpredictable ways to influence the outcome of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.41). These features are particularly relevant to the study of the effects of workforce development on adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities since we have a very limited literature in this area and the goal of this study is to describe the perceptions of the effects of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Merriam (1988) argues that a qualitative research design is appropriate for this study when the researcher is interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. This investigation focused on a phenomenon, the perception of the impact of workforce development training on the identification of vocational interests of African American adjudicated youth with disabilities in the Texas Youth Commission's Project RIO-Y. The purpose is to provide information that may address the lack of success of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities and add to the scarce knowledge about the effects of workforce development on vocational interests of these youth.

Background

Project RIO-Y is a workforce development training program administered since 1995 by Texas Youth Commission (TYC). It is a collaborative project between the Texas Workforce Commission, which is responsible for the State's

job training and placement, and the Texas Youth Commission, which is responsible for detention and education of juvenile offenders in the State of Texas. Project RIO-Y provides vocational education and job preparation services for adjudicated youth and then refers paroled offenders to local Workforce Commission Centers. Funding for Project Re-Integration Offenders Program-Youth (RIO-Y) was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor under the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 youth job-training programs legislation.

Project RIO-Y prepares adjudicated youth with disabilities, committed to the State's custody, to enter the workforce and/or access educational/training opportunities that will ultimately lead to meaningful employment. Once participants are released on parole or to a transitional facility, Project RIO-Y reintegrates offenders into the community by linking them with the Texas Workforce Commission's community job placement and training programs (local area workforce investment board). The local area workforce investment board is required to develop a service plan for each youth participant based on an individual assessment of basic skills such as academic needs, job skills, prior work experience, aptitudes, supportive service needs and developmental needs.

Overview of Project RIO-Y Curriculum

For this study the adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are participating in Project RIO-Y. The Project RIO-Y curriculum

includes lesson on employability improvements and a citizenship and soft skills training format. The instruction is conducted in an institutional setting, but not at a job site. It teaches entry-level skills or enhances the job readiness of participants. The program teaches participants job-seeking techniques (e.g., interviews, resumes, dress, etc.) and increases their motivation and self-confidence. The curriculum also addresses job skill assessments: resume writing, job placement services and other direct training or support activities. An additional focus on how their own efforts affect exploration of a range of career objectives. The classes work on an alternating schedule that may include attending school full time and Project RIO-Y classes or work assignment within the facility.

The Project RIO-Y curriculum incorporates workforce development services, such as pre-employment and job readiness skills, and career exploration. Each participant develops an employability development plan containing individual goals for workforce development and education. Project RIO-Y focuses on re-socialization through its emphasis on youth's successful reintegration through workplace readiness. During the pre-release phase of the program, pre-and post-test scores are compared to measure change in knowledge of the workplace. Other assessments, including interest, aptitude and basic skills testing, help staff and the participant prepare the individual employability plan. The curriculum is design to help participants meet the following objectives: (a)

complete an employment application, (b) develop a resume or pocket resume, (c) demonstrate acceptable interviewing skills. The interviews are videotaped and critiqued, and (d) prepares and present a 30-second commercial on himself. The participants then participate in an exit interview prior to release.

Counselors assist participants in enrolling in postsecondary institutions, technical schools, and other programs which provide other opportunities for development of workplace skills.

Pilot Study

A pilot investigation was completed in 1998. The purpose of the pilot study was to understand the relations between vocational interest and workforce development training as well as their perceptions of how the youths saw their future. The pilot study examined the perceptions of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities on the effects of workforce development training through the Project RIO Program on their vocational interests. One of the difficulties in ascertaining the perceptions of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities is the degree to which they are “hidden” from view. Because there is very little literature with which these youth have developed in workforce development training, understanding them is a great challenge. One possible means of understanding adjudicated African American youth with disabilities involved in workforce development training is to work directly with the juvenile justice systems to identify training influences and the perceptions the

youths may have after involvement in their workforce development training program on the vocational interest. This qualitative research approach will yield information that are, on one hand, broad enough to develop insight for more workforce development training programs and on the other hands, rich enough to inform refinement of future research or to develop new programs. The methods included a questionnaire, interviews, tape recording of sessions and using WordPerfect® software to identify and code themes from the interview.

I selected the Corsicana facility as a pilot site. It was selected for several reasons: its diverse population, both socio-economically and ethnically; the location where many of the adjudicated African American youth with disabilities were housed; and its Project RIO-Y program. The Corsicana facility program was selected on recommendation of the Texas Youth Commission because the facility house youth with special education needs. The Corsicana facility youth were representative an in training and graduated population who is or is about to leave the workforce development training.

For the study, 2 participants were selected from the Corsicana facility by the program counselor based on the following criteria: 16 year-olds, African American, and male, time in program and release date to leave facility. For this study, I piloted a semi-structured questionnaire guide for an open-ended interview. I interviewed two adjudicated African American male youth with

disabilities to gather information on the type of questions that would be appropriate for the interviews to be conducted with study participants.

I learned the following from the pilot study: I assumed that the youths thought that their career would be too difficult for them to reach. In general, the youth had formulated a vocational plan with career goals after completing the Project RIO-Y program. The raw data from these interviews, however, did not contribute to the analysis component of this study, but gave some reference point.

The feeling that I drew from the pilot study was the interviews were in-depth, coding and themes development needed more debriefing with counselors, and I was able to gather information on how significant the influence of parents and others was in developing soft skills for the workplace that are essential to success for the participants.

Working through major steps of the qualitative research process was the most beneficial skills acquired during the pilot study. As well, I learned that the focus of my research needed to be altered, reducing the different ranges of participant categories and magnitude of the scope of data collection and analysis, thus making the method of inquiry possible to facilitate. I learned from the pilot study was: (a) the training led to positive improvements inside the facility with the participants. (b) the open-interviews work well with this youth population. In addition the finding indicated the language was used reflecting peer communication versus adult to child interaction. Also their attitude toward

vocation development changed during sessions they get to exchange ideas about their eventual career choice.

Texas Youth Commission Placement Procedures

After a judge commits a youth for incarceration in a Texas facility, the youth is provided three opportunities to enroll in Project Re-Integration of Offenders-youth (RIO-Y). The youth move forward in the Orientation and Assessment Program which assigns them based on his crime and psychological evaluation to an appropriate facility. Depending on statutory provisions, the placement and release decision in any facility may rest with the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) once the decision for placement is made. In other instances, the judge retains jurisdiction and determines placement and duration of confinement. The assignments are based on the nature and seriousness of offenses. Approximately 30 percent of adjudicated delinquents are placed in residential facilities for specific or indeterminate time periods, while others' sentences range from low-risk nonresidential commitment to a maximum-risk residential commitment depending on statutory provisions.

The TYC facilities are self-contained and typically provide some level of rehabilitative services for youth, including health, education, counseling, recreation, and employment and training. The first opportunity to be admitted to Project RIO is provided at the Marlin, Texas Unit, where all youth being processed into the TYC system receive academic and psychological assessments.

The court uses the assessment data and the type of offense to assign them to either a special needs facility for youths with disabilities or a regular facility within the system. The second opportunity for admission can occur at any time during their sentence. The youth simply has to express interest in enrolling in the program after a presentation and additional information is provided about the program in academic classes. The third opportunity occurs during an orientation prior to assigning a youth to a facility determined by TYC and the judge. Orientation occurs at the Brownwood, Texas facilities where all offenders are administered computerized career interests surveys and aptitude questionnaires.

For those youth interested in entering Project RIO-Y, computerized vocational test results are matched with occupations through a computerized assessment and an interest profile is developed. This is done through the use of the U.S. Department of Labor's Guide for Occupational Exploration, Dictionary of Occupational Titles and Texas Career Alternatives Resource Evaluation System (CARES) which are housed in each facility, and additional vocational tests may be administered with pencil and paper classroom assignments. Staff interviews and test data are used to determine the careers to be explored by each youth.

Target Population

This research study included 10 adjudicated African Americans male youths with disabilities incarcerated in two Texas Youth Commission facilities.

The two facilities are the Corsicana and Crockett units. The youth residing in these facilities have committed status offenses or delinquent acts. Delinquent acts typically fall into three categories: crime against persons, crime against property, and crimes related to substance abuse. Status offenses may include behaviors such as running away from home, truancy, ungovernability, curfew violations and underage drinking. For this study the state statutes prohibited access to the participants' records due to privacy laws and as a ward of the State.

Criteria for Selecting Study Participants

Participation in this study was voluntary. Ten Participants were selected from youth who, at minimum, had been enrolled in Project RIO-Y for at least 6 months or completed the training within the last year. The youth, all of whom completed the Project RIO-Y within a year, had 6 weeks to 3 months remaining on their stay in the facility prior to release. However, the participants might be released from the facility at anytime due to a court disposition or adjudication that can release them from the facility as soon as possible. It was important to have a relative balance between youths who were in the process of completing Project RIO-Y, and those who already completed the vocational and education classes. Project RIO-Y graduates were allowed to participate in the study within one year of completing their training so there was a greater the likelihood that they were able to accurately recall their workforce training experiences. All participants in this study were asked by the researcher to express their willingness to engage in

active self-revelation, active self-reflection and self-disclosure about their youth experiences in verbal communications that could provide useful data for addressing the research objectives prior to being selected as participants. This was designed to verify their cooperation and willingness to participate.

Sampling

Unlike quantitative research, which uses a random sample that usually generalizes to a larger population, qualitative research uses a purposive and homogeneous sampling method. The purposive sampling used in this study involved selecting informants who received workforce training. With the assistance from the Project RIO-Y counselors, selected participants from among participants in the present training class and those who completed the training. This was done based on the recommendation of the counselor assigning participants to the study.

Participants were purposefully selected through homogeneous sampling which focuses, reduces, simplifies, and facilitates group interviews (Patton, 1990). This approach identifies participants of interest based on information provided by people (the counselors) who know potential participants who would be candidates for the research and provide good interview subjects. This was accomplished by having counselors select youths who transition plan showed promise for completing the Texas Youth Commission's Orientation Program. The counselors' contacted potential participants identified through the sampling strategy and

requested their participation (Appendix A). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) They were in good standing (no demerits for breaking the rules) or (b) low risk for antisocial acts, (c) enrollment determined by the counselor of more than 6 months or having completed the program, having committed a non-violent crime such as truancy, (d) information-rich (history) gathered during the interviews or from the counselor about their family, school, and community is considered, (e) youths who either verbally expressed their vocational expectations or based on their progress in the program by the Project RIO counselors, (f) documented disability, (g) the student's race (African American), (h) gender (male); (i) 16 years of age, (j) schooling-- all had completed at least the 10th grade of high school or having earned a General Equivalent Diploma, (k) employment status: employment opportunities as determined by the case management (services needed and provided for the participants) of the Project RIO-Y counselors in the Corsicana and Crockett facilities.

Participants

The ten participants were all sixteen years of age, were enrolled in the 10^{th} grade and were adjudicated because of various types of non violent offences with had certified disabilities. Their disabilities were confirmed by the counselors. Participants' identities were kept anonymous due to their status as minors and protection provided by juvenile justice privacy laws. Therefore, each participant's

name and other potential identifying factors were changed. The 10 African American males participating in the research project were selected by the Project RIO-Y counselor using their grading, age and success in completing the assignments for sample. Five participants were chosen from each facility. Ten participants from among thirty eligible youth in each program in 2 of 16 facilities of possible participants in the study were chosen.

The participants were asked by the counselors to participate in the study. Participants were strictly voluntary. These individuals referred to the study were labeled a number of different ways (e.g., at-risk, behaviorally disordered, emotionally handicapped, emotionally and behaviorally disordered, and socially maladjusted). The overall profile and history of the youths participating in the study represent the highest unemployment group and hardest to train based on research with African American youth high unemployment and training participation (Price, 1996).

Role of the Researcher

I was actively involved in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, I was consistent with the natural paradigm, the researcher spent time over several days in the Project Re-Integration of Offenders-Youth (Project RIO-Y) Corsicana and Crockett facilities prior to the study to get familiar with the facilities and to observe the activities of the youth. The purpose of the visits was to understand the facility and program culture, to observe the behavior of the participants in the

context of the institution, and to become familiar with the counselors. My visit was also intended to reduce the participant's anxiety associated with the interviews by providing opportunities for them to become familiar with the interviewer, so they are willing to share their perceptions.

Second, I developed an understanding of the training provided at the facilities through the Project RIO-Y by listening to the counselors and trying to learn as a human instrument during this exposure to training inside the facilities. I reviewed the program and toured with the Project RIO-Y counselors in their facilities. I observed the classroom where the raw data was to be collected. The researcher based on visits to the facility visits decided to use observations, interviews, a questionnaire, member check and peer debriefings to conduct this naturalistic research (Ledbetter, Gay & Airaisan, 2000).

To counter potential bias, I referred to the naturalistic framework to show how data collection and analysis were guided by concepts and models used in qualitative research by capturing unique and subjective experiences of the participants. After reading the literature the researcher was aware that purposeful sampling has non-sampling error and sampling bias that can arise in qualitative research. To control the sampling errors I used the approach highlighted by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) which offers numerous procedures such as pay attention to participants during the interviews and while on the facilities tour, shift from a wide angle to a narrow angle lens in viewing the program, that is, focusing

on a specific person, their interaction, and activities, while mentally blocking out all others, look for key words in people, remarks that will stand out later, usually identified through my understanding of the words' implication, and mentally play back remarks and scenes during breaks in the talking and observing.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) highlight the importance of the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher that refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It is an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. It involves my experience and insight, the ability to give meaning to data/experience, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I used my background and community experience to reflect on and interpret observational data.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources including professional literature, professional experiences, and personal experiences. The credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990). I shared my work experience and sincere interest in working with this population.

The Researcher

My background and experiences have shaped his perceptions about the influence and training of youths in workforce development. I grew up in San Antonio, Texas, one of two children of a single divorced parent. My mother worked very hard, sometimes 6 days in private homes as a housekeeper, to give each of her children the opportunity to have an education, an opportunity that she had not had. My paternal grandparents were reared on a plantation in Texas. I am married and have four children. My wife is African American and graduated from college.

My interest in workforce development training began during late adolescence as an intern in a Concentrated Employment Training Act (CETA) summer placement at a local Air Force Base. During that time, I had the opportunity to work and collect a payroll check. This experience made me realize the importance of school, career preparation and work habits. My growing interest in developing a career to help people led him to pursue a degree at a higher education institution. I was drafted into the army and served as a social worker in mental health, drug program and race relations. After returning from the military and graduated from college, I accepted a position with the Bexar County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Agency as a social worker. I began to develop a more profound interest in the at-risk conditions of African American youth while trying to work and attend graduate school. Later, working for a Master in

Education and a Master in Human Services, I continued to develop these interests as well as concern for workforce training for at-risk youths. By being exposed to multiple perspectives such as cultural competence and rehabilitation overview in research at the Southwest Educational and Developmental Laboratory internship during his doctoral studies, My interest in these areas grew, as did his concerns about the incarceration of African American males in the juvenile justice system. My interests were sparked by the youngsters in trouble, who participated in summer track programs, with my son, and through my role on an advisory board in the Texas Youth Commission.

My experiences as a human services worker unquestionably influence his perceptions. In one sense, his experience warns him against rushing into interpretation of communication and behavior, and helps him realize that meanings and understandings change as I moved from one context to another. My experience also increases my concern for being careful and fair in his interpretations.

Perhaps being African American male influences the way I look at people. I tend to look at them as individuals without using stereotyping, rather as members of groups. The need to do that emerged from events in his African American community that put African Americans in one group rather than individuals. Although I recognize the influence of the social and cultural context, he tends to view each person as a unique individual. It is because of this that I had

a strong interest in qualitative methodology to support his orientation toward complexity and uniqueness. This approach allows me to use the sensitivity to the youth's experiences to help me better understand what I was observing.

My interests and research focus have evolved as a result of the various experiences and long-acquired knowledge of rehabilitation. I believe all of these experiences have created certain preconceptions, resulting in both strengths and limitations to this study. I am aware that I have biases and preconceptions that I may not be aware of. I realize, of course, that acknowledging my biases does not authorize me to treat his impressions as respectable evidence.

Data Collection

Instrument

Interview Guide

At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 23). The following principles were applied in developing the interview guide (see Appendix C).

Questions

The ten questions included in the interview guide were developed based on a pilot study conducted by the researcher, literature reviewed that described

vocational acquisition and workforce development training programs (Pollard, Pollard, Rojewski & Meer 1997; Rojewski, 1997; Crawford, 1996), an unpublished 1992 research paper on vocational development, and published research on African Americans with disabilities and the Vocational Education literature (Grubb et al., 1999). However, the research also identified that more information was needed to determine the best strategies for increasing the participation of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities, who are from a from low social-economic status (SES) background, and are enrolled in vocational and workforce programs. Also, the studies (Grubb et al., 1999) provides a description of the participating patterns of adjudicated African Americans youth with disabilities in vocational education and the historical relationship in developing vocational skill. The 10 questions used in the interviews were:

1. How did your current vocational interest develop?
2. What specific events influenced the development of your vocational interest?
3. When did you start thinking about choosing a vocation?
4. To whom did you talk to about your vocational interest?
5. Were there specific programs in your school or community that helped you decide on a vocational interest?

6. What person or person(s) had the most influence on your vocational interest?
7. Was attending school useful in influencing your vocational interest?
8. Do you think you will be successful in realizing your vocational interest? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. To whom did you talk to in the home, school, and/or community about your vocational interest? Was it helpful? If so, How? Where they helpful?
10. What do you think your chances are of finding a job in this area of vocational interests?

I used an interview guide to asked questions for the interviews. It consisted of the above list of 10 pre-determined questions selected by the interviewer. The interview guide was based on the theoretical literature (Stern & Eichorn, 1989) on vocational development, the pilot study, practical professional experience of the researcher, and from a study of employment and training for court-involved youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). Although it was prepared by me to insure the same information was obtained from each person, there were no predetermined responses, and in semi-structured interviews the interviewer is free to probe and explore within these predetermined inquiry areas. Interview guide ensured good use of limited interview time; they allowed comprehensive responses and the researcher to interview multiple subjects more systemically: and they helped the researcher to

keep interactions focused. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, interview guides can be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or exclude questions the researcher found to be unrelated for the goals of the research (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). I developed questions about home, school and community influences that were useful in helping to understand the meaning of Project RIO-Y to its participants. The questions were developed based on the pilot study conducted by me, feedback from the Project RIO-Y counselors, his understanding the beneficiaries' views of the program, and their terminology.

This study also used interviewing methods described by Spradley (1979). The types of questions included "grand tour" questions, which served to "break the ice" and provide context for the answers to subsequent, more specific questions. Other types of questions were "mini tour" questions, example questions, and experience questions which were more specific and sought descriptions of more limited fields of interest and influence activity and were designed to elicit greater specificity and variety that were used in this study. I phrased the questions using language, which was both culturally, and personal appropriate (Spradley, 1979).

This study used phenomenological inquiry which contains three basic steps (Patton, 1990). They are the epoch, phenomenological reduction and structural synthesis. Epoch is the period where I must examine herself/himself in order to identify personal biases, and remove all traces of personal involvement in

the phenomena being studied by using the society and familial experiences. This was done by taking several trips to the facilities and attending meeting with the supervisors to discuss the population in general and after the interviews. The purpose of this self-examination was for me either to eliminate or to gain clarity from my own preconceptions, and is part of the ongoing analytic process rather than a single fixed event (Patton, 1990, p. 408).

Phenomenological Reduction

In this phase the researcher brackets the rest of the world and any presuppositions with which the researcher approach the participants of this study. It was my goal to identify the phenomenon the youth discussed during the interviews such as influence, type of careers of parents, role models, etc. in its pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions (Patton 1990, p. 408). In the final stage of this interview process, a structural synthesis was used through the open-ended semi-structured questionnaire that has been applied to involve the articulation of the experience of the phenomenon of the adjudicated African American youth with disabilities perception and the description of its deep structure. For this approach to work I phrased the questions using language which was both culturally (man, brother, hand-shake) and personally appropriate (soul-terms, bias, understanding, etc.) (Spradley, 1979).

Spradley (1979) found that some cultural knowledge is explicitly expressed through language. Whatever cultural language-terms (e.g., dog, man,

dis, etc.) the youth used during the observational period (prior to interviews) brought some familiarity to their language for the researcher. It is believed, based on the increased immediacy it may have provided, that the use of this language helped reduce the obvious differences between the researcher and the participants. Cultural reality presented by the youth help guided and interpreted social behavior demonstrated by the youth (Geertz, 1973).

Procedure

For this study, semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) were used as the primary strategy for data collection. Patton (1990) described three types of qualitative interviewing: informal, conversation interviews, semi-structured interviews, and standardized, open-ended interviews.

The first phase of data collections included participant observation in the classroom. It enabled me to gain a preliminary understanding of the training program and develop rapport with staff and youth. Observations were made when the youth were in the Project RIO-Y's training room and field notes taken to record the youths' and counselor's training activities and interactions. Initial observations were unstructured and occurred at various times to observe behavior and lessons during the day, providing me with a general understanding of the context in which the program operates.

Semi-structured interviews were used as a low-cost, rapid method of gathering information from individuals or small groups. These interviews were

open and I used an interview guide. The flexible guide ensures that the interview focuses on the issue at hand, but the interview is conversational to allow participants to introduce and discuss issues which they deem to be relevant. The interview guide, prepared in advance was flexible but focused, was collaboratively designed with input from the Project RIO staff.

I used a semi-structured interview that included a minimum of ten questions. This small number conveyed the focus of the research, allowed for conventional flexibility, and enabled me to become very familiar with the subject or problem area. Familiarity of me with the interview guide, along with that of local languages and cultures, is critical initially for the interview to be conducted in a conventional and informal way (The World Bank Group, 2001).

Interviews with the participants were tape-recorded. Follow-up questions by the researcher were also used to allow the participants to clarify and elaborate their answers. All the interviews took place in the Project RIO-Y classroom.

I realized during the interviews that the youths may have trouble defining the boundaries of the study and addressing reciprocity issues because of their age related to labor market involvement, program services and workforce preparation. Second, the interviews included questions based on the initial set of questions used in the pilot study, literature review, and my experiences as a human service administrator and job trainer, and from related professional literature. Third, the interviews were designed by providing a framework established in the pilot study

questions within which participants can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view about the programs. The questions elicited information about the vocational interest of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities and how Project RIO training influenced them.

My interview style emphasized developing rapport with the participants. I would frame questions and use language that I thought was common to the youth's peers and family such as "un hun" and "yea" and body language (e.g., the nodding of the head to the side). I used appropriate caution in trying to interpret their body language that may not have been as self-revealing as I would want. I used the language of the participants so as to avoid naming or speaking (interpretation) of their experiences for them such as "homeboy" instead of friend. Through active listening and through verbal responses that actively talked about their issues and ideas, I made every effort to provide an atmosphere of engaging trust which allowed participants to develop ideas and construct meaning, to share attitudes and feelings which typically are not quantifiable and usually are missed in survey and semi-structured interview research. An example of this was the thoughts of a participant admitting how tough it would be to returning to his old neighborhood and pursue his vocational goals: (a) the negative peer pressure expected to be encountered, (b) school authorities would scrutinize his activities in school, (c) mother verbally would not recognize his achievement of completing

RIO, (d) preacher would sermonize him of his sins, and (e) guys would attempt to encourage use of illicit drugs.

I anticipated that participants might wish to introduce questions of their own and that they would request personal information about me or information about the progress of my study, which I would openly shared with them. I also anticipated that the interview process would evolve in such a way that the narrative assumed a more conversational tone. While my own self-disclosure served as a model of openness to aid in building trust with the participants, the degree to which the researcher disclosed information that was not without risk to the participants. Regardless of the intent of a researcher, participants, especially adjudicated youth, in a study may not always receive a researcher's self-disclosure in a constructive way.

Before starting the interview, it was necessary to identify a procedure for recording the interview data. I relied on written notes and a tape recorder to record the interview content. I used the tape recorder because it was able to capture data more faithfully than my hurriedly written notes and it made it easier for me to focus on the interview. The transcription was written on a pad during and after the interviews.

I gathered information about the participants' experiences, the community they resided in, and workforce development training provided in their correction facility. The questions represented my "definitive exposition" of the experience of

conducting and participating in this heuristic, phenomenological study. The questions came from my background and what the researcher understands is natural to identifying with their experiences as if they are his. The emergence of findings and lessons learned from my interaction with the participants and data, my continual process of introspection and internalization throughout the course of the study, my recognition of themes consistent across interviews and his understandings of my personal need for further learning, introspection, understanding, and self-development are addressed in this section.

Heuristics

The concept of heuristic research process such as language from the hood or understanding the kinships that exists among this population involves seeing dialogue as a specific form of dialectic or communications in a manner that the researcher have experienced with in the past. Part of the methodology was verifying collection procedure with test of validity, reliability and range of findings that are done in this chapter (Kleining & Witt, 2000). The influence of home, school and community on the vocational development of African American males may connect their understanding of vocational interests to the labor market by investigating and planning to pursue possible career paths. The application of a heuristic in this study is a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities perception of the affects of workforce development on their vocational interests. The researcher had

to draw on his personal experience with the judicial system, school, home (family), and community to understand the mindset of the youth in their facility environment. It was through shared reflection and inquiry between me and the participants as I intensely experienced and reflected on the phenomenon in question that the researcher worked to understand in the literature search, first and foremost, my understanding of adjudicated African American male youth and workforce development, as well as the perceptions and workforce development influences of the participants. It is with this reflection that the researcher moves to discern the application of the same principles in others' lives, which have lived a similar experience. I was passionate about this subject matter and was searching for new insight and revelation on the topic.

For this study, I sought to use his background and understanding the youth, who are incarcerated and have disabilities, and their past experiences to influence vocational interests. The investigation and conclusion depends on individual interpretation "because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities," and because the validity of interpretations are likely reliant on contextual factors such as the "particular investigator-respondent interaction" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 42). My study was directed at a group of participants who had not been successful in developing their vocational interests because of their social and educational backgrounds. Idiographic interpretation focused on the individual rather than generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Accordingly, the

three narrative sets of data, home, school and community, in this study were analyzed independently, “in term of the particulars of the individual” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 45). Some of the data collected in the semi-structured part of the interview were fairly easy to manipulate into variables, both categorical and continuous.

Observation during the Interview

Observation data described the setting, activities, and participants involved in the study (Patton, 1990). Adler and Adler (1994) defined qualitative observations as those that occurred in naturalistic settings with no defined categories for measuring responses, with data collection from observation used for descriptive purposes. Patton (1990) lists three advantages of observations. First, the direct observation of the research setting provided the opportunity to more clearly understand the context in which the participant’s activities of interest are taking place. As the observer, I was closely involved in the phenomenological context. Also, observations are valuable in that they provide information that might be overlooked by participants or others who have become immersed in the purpose of the research. So I was able to obtain greater insight into the workforce development training setting and collect more information with the participant during the interview.

According to Mertens (1998), several levels of researcher participation are possible. In particular, she describes passive participation as accomplished when the researcher was present at the research site, but has no interaction with research subjects (Mertens, 1998). In this study I functioned as a passive participant. I chose the role so that the integrity of the research environment could be maintained. He was present in the research environment to interview and make notes. Initial observations were unstructured and occurred at various times during the interview, providing me with a general understanding of the context in which the individuals function within the workforce development training program or record any significant change during the interview

Interview Data

In the semi-structured interview, each participant was asked to respond to ten open-ended questions. The ten questions elicited information used to answer the questions that are the focus of this research. All responses were summarized and reported in this section for each of the interview questions. These responses were chosen because they articulate the theme reported in the conclusions.

Data Analysis

While data reduction actually begins prior to data collection through the process of selecting sites, conceptual frameworks, research questions, and data collection methods, “data reduction occurs continuously throughout the life of any qualitatively oriented project” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Additionally,

prior to data collection, a list of propositions was written and reflected what the researcher expected to find given his understanding of previous research. The propositions were: (a) the youth answers to the questions would reflect honesty and truth; (b) the youth would be delayed in their vocational development; and (c) influence on participants' vocational would be limited to parents. That list was written, stored, and left in the researcher's raw data until data analysis was concluded. The propositions served to point out how outcomes were consistent with or contrary to a priori expectations grounded in the literature. During the course of data collection, summaries, and memo writing (theoretical, thematic, questions to focus later observations or interviews) were used to capture the insights that occurred on the spot and that would be valuable as "snapshots" of those thoughts.

After the interviews were conducted and recorded, they were transcribed by me and the RIO counselors in their entirety and the raw data subjected to the inductive process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1983). This method is concerned "with generating and plausibly suggesting many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 103) such as the literature indicating poverty and literacy with this population.

Coding

Once the major task of transcribing interviews was done, I coded and sorted the data according to the category schemes with the WordPerfect® software. First, the names were coded (an alias) and assigned a number for each interview transcript. I reviewed the responses, which might not have been evident once I reduced the interview the interview to data bits. Second, I chose to separate the coding information from the body of the data to assist with identification and analysis. I created this alignment by using the "left indent" capability. The researcher formatted his data bits with a paragraph allocated for each bit. Left indent maintained the alignment until the end of each paragraph. Third, I repeated the second step and took the pages of categorized data bits, coded and created a new file of each interview, and added the category coding to the data bits in the new file. I chose numeric coding for categories. I chose numeric instead of alphabetic (name) coding because multi-level categories required a way of keeping track of the levels. Numbers were an easy way to accomplish this.

As my experience with qualitative research was so limited, I discovered WordPerfect® software through the literature search had the capability I needed to assist with categorizing, coding, and sorting/manipulating the data using numbers and keys. I wanted the data to speak for itself, but the researcher became overwhelmed with the manual process of handling the data. I used the WordPerfect® software to reduce his workload of this manual process.

WordPerfect® provided him with an efficient filing system to pull the data together; I placed it in multiple categories with subcategories, and arranged it to suit my inductive process. As a result, WordPerfect® software saved many hours of manual labor, allowing me to focus on the meaning of the data.

WordPerfect® software helped me with his data in important ways. It helped to speed up the mechanistic process, of storing data (by giving commands in the spreadsheet that synthesized themes and patterns), to code (by assigning numbers to each interviewer/interviewee turn), and to organize the data (by cutting-and-pasting, and categorizing the selected data bits).

Transcriptions of the taped interviews and interview notes were entered into WordPerfect® software files. This analysis allows the researcher to develop each concept in terms of its properties and dimensions, thus creating categories and making connections between categories of concepts during later stages of coding.

Miles and Huberman (1994) provided ideas on coding, ways to display the study's conceptual framework, sampling matrix, and interactions between entities. This was done by sorting of cards by the WordPerfect® software to identify overlapping categories, organization of codes into more inclusive and abstract domains, observational notes and pre-fieldwork mapping of subjects. Open coding was the step in analyzing the data that included filed notes from observations, interviews, noting reflections and comments and identifying similarities, themes and patterns. Open coding was used and attempts were made to use the participant’s

own words to capture themes being described. The analysis of this qualitative data was done using the open coding method. Open coding was the method by which statements by the participants were examined for units of conceptual content. A concept in this sense is defined as a discrete happening, event or instance of phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Open coding was achieved by asking questions from the interview guide. With the WordPerfect® software the researcher was able to code including codes such as “help” and “trouble.” Help” was described as the parent, teacher or significant other encouraging the participant to stay on the right track. Another code was “Trouble” that described as about what happened to the participant. As the codes were sorted, I looked for similarities and differences made comparisons. Also, semi-transcribed field notes of audiotape conversations, selecting conceptually intriguing phrases that either connected with previous literature or suggested patterns that may emerge from the analysis from previous data. Codes were than merged or divided as themes developed.

I coded the data using Wolcott's description-analysis-interpretation theory and the WordPerfect® software. The theory was to understand what the story was describing, make critical decisions, including the degree to which I identify and find purpose in the study. This is equivalent to beginning the narrative. Emphasis was placed on critical events, challenges, valid questions and resultant actions during the earlier adolescent years, so that the reader would have a context for issues and comments that may appear later in the study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) theorized analysis during data collection. This data collection model suggests open coding which allowed me to code each sentence and each incident to ensure full theoretical coverage and prevent him from imposing any preconceived impressions on the data. Analyzing the data during collection allows the researcher to cycle back and forth using interim analysis between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new data. I was able to identify gaps and collect new data to fill gaps in that emerge during data collection by interviewing the participant again if time permitted. Themes were identified through the common use and language explained by the participants in the interview. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding by concepts was recommended when conceptual themes were discovered after scanning this reduced data for instances of influences with specific groups of people (parents, teachers, friends, counselors, and others). Data were separated into individual conceptual text units by question and the corresponding answer using the interview guide development prior to the interviews.

The coding process for this study commenced with a search within individual narrative sets for data concerning three broad topics (home, school, and communities). The first of these topics was the participant's family, educational background, and community, which were important in the portrayal of participants as "whole persons" (Patton, 1990). This was determined by the

literature and the pilot study's findings which suggest parents and workforce development training was significant factors influencing career development of this population. The researcher used this approach to discover qualitative relations such as themes or patterns and changes of the youths' perception of the effects of workforce development training on their vocational interests. The discussion of significant person(s) of influence for development of vocational interests, including the key individual in the life of the participants, was the second topic coded. Because the literature on workforce development training suggested a relation between family, school, and community, all discussion of home, school and community were coded together by as being influential in motivating youth to participate in the workforce development training program.

All data within the individual narrative sets regarding the effects of workforce development were coded by how they the participants answered the questions about their careers development. Different color markets were used to denote blocks of data considering these topics (home, school, community) resulting in three subtopics of data within each individual response to the questions. In a second coding step, data within these sub subsets were arranged chronologically in terms of the participants' career history or lack of training.

I initially assigned a four-digit category code (1001, etc.) to identify my categories for sorting and created a "code book" to provide descriptions of each category (i.e., family). Later I made one of the first major changes to his category

scheme. I changed from the four-digit code to a five-digit code. This was done to facilitate additional category/subcategory distinctions within the code. For small numbers of category changes, I simply edited the file and keyed in the changes, but for the major changes, the researcher used the “replace” function of WordPerfect® software (under the “edit” function of the menu bar at the top of the screen. The “replace” function allowed him to “search for the old code (i.e., 1023) and replace with the new code (i.e., 22231).

A five step coding process was used: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) testing the emergent themes against the data; (d) searching for alternative explanations of the data; and (e) writing the results. With this process in place the data from the study was transcribed and coded. Codes were assigned based on his assessment using the responses to the interview guide questions. This was done when I found a meaningful segment of text in the transcript and was continued until I had segmented all of his data and completes his coding. After finishing the initial coding I summarized and organized the data by themes. I continued to refine and revise his codes. The coding was repeated a second time through selective coding using the researcher’s experiences in school and community which examined the organization of relationships between concepts created in the first step coding stage and selecting a core category that seemed to encompass all the other categories. The two coding trials, open and selective coding, results were identified

in the categories. The step involved scanning reduced data indicating differences in relationships and factors for influencing participants on vocational interest by specific places (home, school, community) to capture the essence of what was said. Again, these reduced data were separated between persons. For example, at this point, in the summary files would be African American mothers, teachers and relatives. As a consequence of this analysis, further refinement of the categories of sources of the effect of workforce development training emerged. The groups were expanded to include siblings, extended family and what was labeled “external links.” The identifying of an uncle or peer is an example of an external link.

To further reduce the data, each of the categories was searched and messages of vocational interests were coded (vint.rio). Each file was split into columns to enumerate the code appearance. In the right-hand column, illustrations of the perception of the influence of workforce training on their vocational interests were listed and in the left-handed column, illustration of group influences it represented. These files were labeled as, for example teacher (filename=teach.int), cousin (filename=cous.int), etc. Each individual is subject to an interpretive screen provided of the researcher who brings some understanding of who is embedded in a social network within broader cultural web of significance. Some influence guided by experience and literature will be interpreted as meaningful and others will not.

After reviewing the guidelines for coding set forth in Miles and Huberman (1994), the coding categories were changed to a less cryptic abbreviation that could be more easily recalled because of using the WordPerfect® software. Coded strips were then grouped or clustered together by themes such as person, place or situation. Once the data were coded, it was possible to identify patterns and themes, whereby coding reliability could be examined for relationships. This was done completely by hand.

Categorizing

Using WordPerfect® software to categorize involved organizing coded data units into categories with similar characteristics such as whom, where, and when (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).This was subject to my inductive process of constant comparison is generating many categories and properties about their perceptions. The constant comparison method was done in four stages that included: (a) comparing situations applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing a theory. Upon repeated and close examination, if coded in this study, categorizing emerged for the three sub-narratives of each participant. Categories in this study became stages or phases of vocational interests or workforce development regarding adjudicated African American males with disabilities.

I returned to the Project RIO-Y counselors after categorizing transcript and discussing data to debrief and about the participants' comments and to gain understanding of the interactions from the interviews. Statement and situations from the participants were presented to the counselors in written form, who clarified and/or confirmed emerging issues during data collection and analysis. However, to strengthen credibility of the data, literature, the administrator of Project RIO-Y and the counselors were used as an expert in triangulation of the data.

The Quality of Research

Reliability and Validity

Reliability given similar settings and participants could generate for this study similar conclusions or identify comparable relationships among constructs. The precise reconstruction of this study is virtually impossible, but the replication of this study, which was conducted in a natural setting, was particularly subject to the ever-changing nature of the youth detention facilities and culture under investigation. The unique situations of this study cannot be repeated, nor can the same subjects recreate the scenes that were previously observed or describe and subsequently recorded. Nevertheless, for this study a clear articulation of the data collection method should help reassure that a similar study in a similar setting, comparable results would be obtained.

For this study I used three procedures for validity strength: (a) Interviews conducted were designed to be more in line with the pilot study and the literature results that have some meaning for the informants; (b) Interviews are carried out in naturalistic settings which reduce the problems associated with studying in an artificial environments; and (c) I engaged in self questioning by asking the counselors questions about a youth when the answers seem questionable or said something that was inappropriate. As a consequence, I was far more likely to accurately report what is actually occurring.

Dependability and Credibility

Data gathering methods included key informant interviews. I used two methods to achieve triangulation (confirmation of the same information by different methods or sources) to increase the credibility of the results with the literature review and the pilot study. Credibility was based on the interview guide used and the internal validity of the study. I assumed the presence of multiple realities such as disability or race, and attempted to represent these multiple realities adequately in the understanding of the youth's vocational background, schooling, and parental influence by using the Project RIO-Y staff as an expert panel to review the finding and determine if the findings matched the observation. Credibility was supported by visiting the facilities, observation in the program training, and triangulation guide by the interviews, counselors' sampling, pilot study and feedback from the program administrator from the questions for

clarification after the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All three factors were used to increase the credibility of this study. First, the study was performed over 18 month period of time. Second, evidence collection was performed once the participants were identified and gave permission (see appendix) for the interviews. Finally, evidences from interviews and comments by the Project RIO-Y counselors at the post briefing after the interviews were used to help support the trustworthiness of the findings.

I was the criteria for assessing value and trustworthiness outlined by Marshall (1985a) with the following in mind: (a) data collection methods are explicit; (b) data were used to document participants experiences; (c) negative instances of the findings are displayed and accounted for; (d) biases are discussed with the Project RIO-Y staff, including biases of interest (personal, professional, policy-related) by the researcher's feeling during the interviews; (e) strategies for data collection and analysis are made public; (f) data are preserved; and the (g) participants' truthfulness was assessed after the interview with the two Project RIO-Y counselors. Lincoln and Guba (1985) theorize these questions as establishing the true value (p. 290) of the study, its applicability, its consistency and its neutrality. Every systemic inquiry into the human condition must address these issues.

While qualitative methods address different research questions and methodology, rigor was established. I used Guba's and Lincoln's (1994) theory to establish rigor, or trustworthiness, of this qualitative study. I clarified and summarized information from the counselors and administrator with the following in mind. Credibility, for my goal was to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the participants were accurately identified and described. This was done though the sampling phase and the two counselors requesting to participate on the day of the interview. The inquiry must be credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities (p. 296). The construct was established in the interview guide from the pilot study. My understanding of the training influences of the program on the participants was aforementioned in this section earlier proposed as transferability. This involves the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer than with the original investigator. Dependability where my attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting. The construct is confirmed ability, which captures the traditional concept of objectivity. By stressing whether another could confirm the findings of the study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) remove evaluation from some inherent characteristic of my (objectivity) and place it squarely on the data themselves. Within this study, there

were specific methodological strategies for demonstrating qualitative rigor such as the counselors' checks when coding, categorizing, or confirming results with counselors and the participants.

Ethical Considerations

As a qualitative researcher, I used several safeguards for protecting the participants of the study. First, the research objectives were verbally articulated so the participants could understand and discuss their concerns with others or me. Written permission was obtained from the administrator of Project RIO-Y program prior to the study. In addition, because the participants were incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities, consent of the Texas Youth Commission was obtained prior to interviewing the participants from facility administrator.

Limitations

Bias is inherent in research. I have attempted to identify these biases carefully, summarizing my study and understanding of the language of the participants when it was slang or identify the tacit knowledge, deeper meaning, and consequences connected with the adjudicated African American male youth with a disability human experience of being incarcerated and workforce development training. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), while constructing holistic meaning, the analysis was influenced by my interaction with the participants. I moved back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection

strategies, and analysis. Also, I insured the credibility through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and peer debriefing with the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Peer debriefing was limited due to availability of participants. Based on Miles and Huberman (1994) results, I followed their guide by checking for researcher effects by (a) staying as long at the facilities as possible by (b) using unobtrusive measures where possible by designing interviews more in line with categories that have some meaning for the informants, and (c) making sure the research intentions were clear for informants. To minimize these affects, I avoided elite bias by including youth from the special units versus general population informants and used the pilot study questions. This allowed me to not modify the conventional role: (a) during the interview of asking questions and recording answers; (b) spread out facility visits, and (c) keep research questions firmly in mind. The extent to which the results of this study can be generalized to the larger population of African American youths (external validity) is also limited. Even though there is a paucity of literature on adjudicated African American youths with disabilities involve in workforce training programs, this research will not attempt to examine characteristics of the African American population at large.

The descriptions of the methods used in this study and provided in this chapter give the reader a sense of the efforts to which I went to maximize both the validity and the reliability of the result. Detailed descriptions of the data collection

site and participants should provide a richer understanding of the context into which the results can be placed. I believed that the results of this study could only have been adequately analyzed through the qualitative methods employed.

The participants had different communication skills for sharing information. Some of the participants had poor English skills and others were able to clearly express their views. Some youths used many phrase and clichés. All of its participants emphasized their desire to commit to a goal or school.

Chapter IV

Discussion and Results

This chapter presents and discusses the results of this study of the perceived effect of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youths with disabilities incarcerated in two Texas Youth Commission facilities. Qualitative methods including an interview with each participant and training observations were used to collect data on a sample of 10 adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Sample Description

The 10 participants met the following criteria: (a) African American, (b) a diagnosed disability, (c) at least 16 years-old, (d) adjudicated, (e) enrolled in Project RIO or completed the program within the recent six months period. Each interview was audio taped by the researcher. Participants and counselors validated transcribed interview data by verifying that their thoughts and actions were accurately represented.

Results

Ten individual interviews were conducted with each of the participants. Subsequently, they were transcribed after each interview. The interview data underwent a two-phase analysis procedure performed by the researcher. First, I examined the responses to identify patterns related to the purpose (Fetterman, 1989). Explore the need for training of adjudicated African American male youth

with disabilities. Describe the impact of workforce development training on vocational interests of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. And discuss implication of workforce development through home, school, and community for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities.

Second, I reviewed the taped transcript and notes to identify major response categories. As a result of the review, I identified eight categories of contextual variables through the open coding that includes personal attitudes (belief), personal relationship: parents and peers, school: teacher, work experience and community which appeared to affect participant's vocational interest. To check the appropriateness of the categories as well as their clarity, I wrote response summaries (summary statements) for each category. For the summaries, the researcher condensed interview passages into brief statements, which reflected the meaning of the category. This was done for each transcript, using all categories that applied. The agreement in summary statements suggested that the selected categories were appropriate, as well as exhaustive for all participants (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Merriam (1998) theorizes that emergent categories or themes should clearly reflect answers to the research questions. To address the research questions presented, this section presents descriptions of the unique themes from the interviews that emerged for each research question guiding this study. These

finding reflect the subjective experience of the youths as expressed in interviews and observations.

Responses to Interview Questions

While the literature gave evidence of the influences of workforce development training on vocational interests the following section provides a more detailed account of the actual messages reported along with the themes that emerged from the analysis of this group of participants. In this section, the "voices" of the participants are heard, and for the first time, their perceptions are provided, insofar as it is possible, in their own words.

Interview Question 1: How did your current vocational interest develop?

The understanding of self plays a large role in vocational choice. Self is a cognitive structure that mediates and organizes everyday experience, regulates affect and channels motivation (Markus & Wurf, 1987). This question sought information about whether the participants perceived that they or someone other than themselves had influenced their vocational aspirations in the formative years of life. Three of the ten participants thought that they had made the decision themselves and that it had been based on knowledge of self (i.e., peer-group experiences, social background, exploration, vocational guidance).

> Particpant 1: "Oh yes, I definitely had the say. I really had no direction. I made the decision myself."

Particpant 10: “I've always had an interest in the RAP music. Just watching TV or hanging with the guys in my neighborhood, I've always had an interest in it. Since I was a little kid, I liked the way of making music with people.”

Particpant 3: “I always liked music and when I got to middle school I took some music classes and I liked it a lot and I did okay in it, so I decided to pursue it when I go back to school.”

The other seven interviewees attributed their vocational interests to factors external to themselves. The most commonly cited factors were parents, teachers, friends, relatives, and direct experience with work. The participants from two different facilities gave similar responses.

Parents:

Parents serve as major influences in the lives of their children (Otto, 1989). Of the factors that influence career choice processes, family members, particularly parents, are the most influential determinant of career plans, occupational aspirations, and occupational expectations (Hines, 1997; Lee, 1984; Leong, 1995; Parham & Austin, 1994). Trusty (1996) theorizes that high parental involvement, including an active interest in children’s school subjects, homework, grades, activities, emotional well being, and future aspirations, predicted positive attitudes toward school and the future, better grades, and better career decision

making skills. The participants' responses were immature and unrealistic in nature, but reflective the importance of parents.

> Participant 4: "I think the major factor was my mom. She encouraged me to change my attitude. I did not know my dad, so pretty much my mom."
>
> Participant 3: "I am interested in becoming a psychologist. My mom is a counselor, so I got interested through her. She lives in Lubbock."

Family members

Family members are natural mentors who were more likely to engage adjudicated and disabled boys in activities related to vocational interests, suggesting that extended family members need to be recruited to provide support and mentoring. Family system intersects and interacts with other systems such as gender, race, and class. Poverty, lack of access to opportunities, and gender-role expectations can hamper the development of vocational interests. However, the work of Altman (1997), Blustein (1997), and Fisher and Griggs (1994) found that close family connections and strong role models can be facilitative factors in confronting these barriers. Confirmatory comments include:

> Participant 5: "Well I guess my uncle. He has always been someone who worked on cars. He worked very hard on cars and let me do the simple repairs. I guess that may have been like a role model, which I wanted to follow."

Participant 7: “My mother’s boyfriend was a tire salesman. I spent some time with him in the store.”

Participant 1: “He had top of the line tires and is an assistant manager in the store. I thought it was really interesting. This may be what I do. Sell something!”

Teachers

Teachers can play an important role in providing career development support for adjudicated and disabled youth even though it has not been a significant responsibility of school-based staff or a subject of special training. Hairston (2000) found that African American students preferred teachers to personally discuss career opportunities. African American students also were influenced by helpful teachers in both academic and career concerns.

Students, who said that they knew that they had some ability but needed someone to guide them, revealed teacher and counselor influences in the following comments:

Participant 1: “My teacher got me interested because she saw that I had skill in music and stuff like that.”

Participant 8:“My seventh grade teacher encouraged me to do the right thing. Stay out of trouble and get my schoolwork done. Come to school!”

Teachers encouraged the participants to do their best in school and make positive contributions. It is critical to help adjudicated boys understand and

overcome the effects of perceived barriers and negative outcomes on their own beliefs in their vocational interests and career goals. With this being the case, African Americans' youths' ability to succeed must be intrinsic (Portes & Wilson, 1976).

Interview Question 2: What specific events influenced the development of your vocational interest?

The participants were asked to recall critical events that they thought had some influence on their decisions regarding their vocational interests. While only a few youth could recall specific events, some of those were especially poignant. Here are several examples that reflect the youths' comments:

> Participant 10: "When I was in middle school, my father was arrested. He had been in trouble before. He was sent to prison. I don't know if he did the crime or not. Because of the way he was treated, I decided to be a lawyer."
>
> Participant 10: "When I was younger, I was placed in foster care. I moved several times and since then I want to become a social worker."
>
> Participant 7: "I remember doing my first job with my friend – it was a summer warehouse job, which meant I had a supervisor, who was nice. He helped me a lot."

Participant 10: “I was having problems at school, but was able to make the change when a mentor from a community club came on campus and presented new ideas to consider.”

Interview Question 3: When did you start thinking about choosing a vocation? This question was designed to have the participants consider when the vocational interest process began because subsequent questions focused on actions taken based on the decision. Seven of the participants first started to think about vocational interests at age 15 years-old, around 10th grade, some while in middle school, and a few could not recall:

Participant 2: “After I started high school, maybe I was fourteen years old.”

Participant 6: “I was in the sixth grade when I decided that I want to be a rapper.”

Participant 4: “I was in middle school; I was really good in math. I had a friend who hung out with me and suggested I become a teacher. “He said I talked like a teacher.”

Interview Question 4: To whom did you talk to about your vocational interest? This question stimulated discussion about whom, if anyone, the participants talk to, whether they initiated the discussions, and how helpful the discussions were. A majority of the participants, and the others talked to parents or family members. Among those I talked to, the participants were not likely to initiate the

conversation. Some of the examples are as follow:

Participant 1: “I didn't talk to anyone.”

Participant 3: “No, it was personal. I never talked; I don’t know anyone who is a mechanic.”

Participant 10: “I talked to my RIO Counselor. She was positive . . . She saw that I was doing very well in my wood shop class that I liked it and I knew a lot about it.”

Overall, the verbal responses from the participants to this question were minimal and suggested that few participants talked with anyone about their vocational interests.

Interview Question 5: Were there specific programs in your school or community that helped you decide on a vocational interest?

This question was designed to elicit discussion about their awareness of school or resources available to help them identify and/or develop vocational interests, the informal role that school or community agencies played in the participants’ development. Eight of the participants indicated that there were no specific programs in their school or their communities that they were aware of that helped them. Responses were the following:

Participant 5: “No, I don’t think so.”

Participant 9: “No! In high school there wasn't anything geared toward career interest or anything told to me. It was very ‘don't mess with me’

atmosphere. And it was not until I went to Project RIO that I got individualized attention or help."

Three participants credited school, community, and church programs with helping them slightly. In those instances, the recognition was very positive:

Participant 4:"Well in middle school I took a career course and that really gave me an interest for looking at what I want to do. I took horticulture class in the facility and I figured that I'd take the courses after release from the facility. I enjoyed the career course."

Participant 9: "At the community center I guess I was special or something difficult and a lot of times they would just help me out because they felt that I had the talent to go somewhere ". . . As for my own way it was just trying to make sure that I did not screw up the opportunities that they told me about and stop hanging after school."

Participant 8: "There was a program in the 9th grade where people who had a job came and talked to us about careers. It sounded interesting!"

Participant 8: "Church definitely. I was brought up in a Christian house and mommy tried to put church in me, but I tended not to avoid the gangs in my hood."

Institutions such as the church influenced many of the participants. Spirituality is a large part of the participants' strong links to parents and community. They also feel a positive attachment to their schools back home.

Interview Question 6: What person or person(s) had the most influence on your vocational interest?

This question evoked discussion about individuals who influenced vocational interests. Six participants were influenced by their parents, family members, and significant others in that order. Mothers were cited more frequently than fathers. Four of the participants reported no one had influenced their vocational interest. Ketterson and Blustein (1997) theorized that the relational context of career development. Parent and family systems are associated with progress in career decision-making, affirmative self-efficacy, beliefs and vocational interests. Examples of some typical responses were as follow:

Participant 2: "I can't think of anyone else beside my mom."

Participant 7: "My mother tried to push me to do things to stay out of trouble. When I told her she was right, she encouraged me to study and look into what I want to be."

Participant 9: "My mother, because she was always behind me."

"My mom and Project RIO. But I would say that my involvement in Project RIO was probably the most influential."

Summarily, parents encouraged the youth to seek out their career interest, but did not have the information and assessment tools to provide direction (Ketterson & Bluestein, 1997). Despite the plethora of evidence showing parents as the primary influence on their children's career development, parents often do not have the tools or information they need to use their power most effectively (Orfield & Paul, 1994).

Interview Question 7: Was attending schooling useful in influencing your vocational interest? The question was designed to elicit information about the usefulness of formal instruction in workforce training in planning for a career. Some illustrative responses include:

> Participant 5: "To be honest, there were the career classes that I really enjoyed. I'm actually working in the woodwork shop for the first time helped me too. I interacted with the teacher and counselor in class and we used the computer."
>
> Participant 2: "RIO is okay. When I'm in school, there's no worry. I don't know… you just feel freer. So like your parents are at work and you don't have to worry about them watching you do something wrong or something like that, but when I'm at home you have to watch out for that. You have to watch what you say, watch what you do."
>
> Participant 3: "Project RIO was helpful to me. But as far as deciding what I wanted to pursue as a career I have not made up my mind. What I can say

is that we had a wide variety of subjects that we did. But to be quite honest, I don't think school did a good job of introducing me to a career, vocation, and things like that."

Participant 8: "No! Not at all! Nothing I took in school really was like Project RIO."

Participant 10: "I'm real good in sports and think I can rap, and the teachers expect me to be ignorant. One day I was absent because we had a field trip that day. When I came back, my teacher saw me walking down the hall. She thought I had cut class, and she got mad and sent him to the principal's office. And I just got back from the field trip."

The participants were evenly divided about the usefulness of workforce training. Some indicated that the training was useful. Others could not think of any training or vocational classes that had been useful. In many cases, their participation in Project RIO and the relationship with the Project RIO counselor was as important if not more important than the subjects in prior schools.

Interview Question 8: Do you think you will be successful in realizing your vocational interest? If yes! Why? If not, why not?

The participants in the study were making good progress toward completion of their adjudicated sentence, and many planned to obtain Graduate Equivalency Diplomas and go to college or a training program. However, their level of confidence about achieving their plan ranged from very confident too not

confident with most being confident.

Participant 3: “Yes! I think I will. I just know that I can do anything that I want when I put my mind to, because in the last year I've done a lot of things that I thought I'd never be able to do in Project RIO.”

Participant 5: “I like to read a lot. It’s kind of like I said “library” (as a world) because when I read it’s like you are in a whole different altogether. So you can be like in a space mission or something, and I like reading about animals and just human stuff, science fiction. Participant 9: “Yes, yes. I have the desire to make it and I will because of Project RIO.”

Participant 9: “I feel as though I have to. I feel I reached a low, and I have nowhere to go but up.”

Participant 10: “I feel I have to make a career and I guess I am very determined right now.”

Participant 1: “I hope so! I think so, not really. Once I get started in a career, I feel I will do fine.”

Summarily, some of the school experiences influenced the perception of the classes on interest or career (Klerman & Karoly, 1995). Often the information or teacher limited the exposure to fields of interest. Furthermore, contextual variables such as gender role stereotyping, differential educational opportunities and culture, although mediated by a person’s cognitive appraisal of their validity and importance, do have an effect on career development experiences (Lent et al,

1994).

Interview Question 9: To whom did you talk to in the home, school, and/or community about your vocational interest? Was it helpful? If so, how were they helpful?

This question stimulated discussion about to whom the participants talked, whether they initiated the discussions, and how helpful they were. Typical responses are as follows:

> Participant 10: “I didn't talk to anyone.”
>
> Participant 3: “No, it was completely personal. I never talked; I did not know anything about careers until I talked to the counselor.”
>
> Participant 7: “I talked to the Project RIO counselor and my mom. They were positive. They saw that I was doing well in the facility and class, which I liked it and I was learning a lot from the program.”

Seven of the participants talked to no one, and three talked to Project RIO counselors and parent. Among those who talked to someone, the participants were just as likely to initiate the conversation as not. The responses to this question show that the youth see the counselor playing an important role in providing career development support. There is an inherent separation of workforce development training program from the more traditional schools. Without this collaboration it would disallow an increase in their awareness of the participants career options (Weiler, 1997).

Interview Question 10: What do you think your chances are of finding a job in this area vocational interest?

Based on the feedback from the Project RIO counselors after the interviews, the participants were making good progress toward getting out of the facility and were required to return to school and/or seeking work as a provision in their probation:

> Participant 8: "I believe that I will be successful . . . there is nothing in this world that I believe that I cannot do if I put my mind to it."
>
> Participant 3: "I feel as though I have to. I feel I don't want to come back here, and I have nowhere to go but up. I feel I can get a job in this field and I guess I am very determined right now."
>
> Participant 7: "The job I want to go into is very difficult. I need to go to college. I guess I could succeed, it depends!"

Although the youth valued their training, as evidenced in their high expectations for success, the researcher sensed difficulty in their ability to make successful transitions. The Project RIO-Y counselors verified this through discussions with the researcher. The counselors talked about the recidivism, difficulty in school and getting back with the wrong group. The responses communicated values about work, work habits and communication skills by

pointing out some of the literature they have used, yet the answers to the question facilitated barriers in confronting career readiness.

The coding produced three sub-narratives from the narrative sets of each participant. Vocational influence of youth's experience in the home, school and community was explored from a number of perspectives, including the role of individuals in this process. My data suggests the influence received from individuals in this group help each signal vocational interest and express attitudes toward vocational development. The narrative regarding the participant's process of career development was how the youth determine vocational interests are reported by O'Neil, Ohlde, Toffelson and Pigott, (1980). Their career theories showed that individual, societal, familial, socioeconomic, situational and psychological emotional factors affect career decision-making processes; (c) A narrative regarding the participant's perception of the workforce development training. This was linked to a strong cultural pattern derived both from African roots and from circumstances of racism and poverty (Stack, 1975). It represents a pattern of interlocking mutual relationships that extend beyond family bonds. This relationship with family provides a strong explanation of the desire for independence and vocational interest work found among African American youth (Riley, 1995).

Data Analysis

Once transcribed the data was entered into WordPerfect®, a software program used in order to permit retrieval and to facilitate data analysis. Through the use of WordPerfect® software, entire interviews were coded, stored and analyzed. WordPerfect® allowed me to quickly code segments of text and then automatically retrieve the text segments of all interviews that were associated with a particular code.

A qualitative analysis of the data was carried out using a "phenomenological" approach. Through the methods dictated by this technique preliminary analyses of the interviews were conducted as the interviews were being collected. Thus during, not solely after the process of data compilation, interviews were coded thematically within WordPerfect® and were reviewed, evaluated, and reevaluated through the process of note taking.

Phenomenological approach was a methodology employed for the purpose of investigating the subjective experience of workforce development training phenomena, as contextualized in wider world of meaning making in data as it is gathered and analyzed. Phenomena evolved during the research process through a continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. Phenomenological approach was rooted in the perspective that data interpretations must include the perspective and voices of the adjudicated African American youths with disabilities whom the researcher studied. Phenomenological approach was

inductive in that it starts with the individual and progress to develop more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize and understand patterns within the data. I derived his analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses. I then studied the meaning, intentions, and actions of the research participants.

This qualitative study included excerpts of raw data, in the form of extended quotations. This will allow the reader to make a kind of "validity check" between the data and the researcher's account.

This study did not seek to aggregate African American male youth understanding, perceptions, and constructions of their vocational interests into a single construct. Rather it attempted to present the full range and variety of experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The Results

Table 1 presents the first phase of the analysis. These categories were represented in the literature review. Although career development processes based on traditional person-environment fit theories involve identifying an individual's skills, abilities, and interests; understanding personality, values and beliefs of participants in his study and matching these factors in context will enhance the perception of the effects of the training. There were eight categories identified based on the themes identified in the coding of raw data, each representing a

contextual domain. Definitions of the categories and response summaries for one of the participants are included in the table.

I have made interpretive connections between narrative vignettes and forms of descriptions, such as direct quotations. Direct quotes from interviews with the participants, from field notes and audiotape were forms of vignette that enriched the analysis and furnished documentation for the researcher's point of view. Direct quotes from different individuals serve to demonstrate literature review and researcher's agreement about some phenomenon. Direct quotations from the different people on different occasion provided evidence that certain events are typical or could demonstrate a pattern or trend in perception over time. This is identified in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Major Questions and Categories: Contextual Categories

What Factors Have Contributed to the Youths' Vocational Interests?

Personal Attitudes (Beliefs)	-Staying out of trouble
	-Job a top priority
	-optimistic career outlook
Personal Relationship	
Parent(s)	-M: Influential, supportive, encouraging

		-F: abusive, away from home a lot, negative
	Peers	-Supportive, encouraging, hangs out together
School		
	Teacher	-failed me, placed me in school suspension, -source of counseling -courses were easy -showed appreciation for my music
	Work Experience	-selling drugs -neighborhood store stocker
	Community	-close family friend -social service provider

Abbreviations: M=Mother, F=Father, Personal attitudes = General (worldly) beliefs, personal strengths. Personal relationships = Significant interaction with parents and peers. School = Factors inside of school personnel (i.e., discipline, type of class, specific courses, comments). Work experience = Full or part-time work experiences. Community = Perceived influences from community individuals, groups, or organizations.

Table 2 introduces the new categories: (a) personal attributes (formerly personal attitudes), (b) home (parents), (c) school (teachers/counselors, peers), and (d) community (work experience, human service recipient). The accompanying subcategories are included in the table, which consists of the individual or program responsible for the influential activity. The themes and their definitions are also included. Percentage under each theme reflects the frequency of endorsement by the 10 adjudicated African American participants with disabilities.

Table 2

Contextual Categories and Themes for Contributions to Career Interest

Contextual Categories		
Subcategories	Experiences	
Setting/Context	Individual/Program	(Contribution themes)
Personal Attributes	Self (participants)	
-self-confidence	(positive attitude)	
- (always know or felt)		4 out of 10
		-Goal-oriented
	(determined, general plan, Project RIO help seek)	
		6 out of 10
-Beliefs (Project RIO helped with awareness, values and understanding)		
		7 out of 10

	-Role model (counselors and teachers influence to pursue for self)	3 out of 10
	-Interest (long term attraction to skill development)	1 out of 10
Home	Parents	
	-Supportive (encouraging, low expectation, reinforcing, providing opportunities, exposure to different lifestyle)	3 out of 10
	-Role models (someone to look up to, demonstrate that it can be done)	2 out of 10
School /Teacher/Counselor	-Supportive	2 out of 10
	-career exploration	1 out of 10
-punitive		5 out of 10
	-Role Model	0 out of 10
Vocation	-involvement in school classes	2 out of 10
-Exposure to positive programs		1 out of 10

-vocational challenging (special classes)

1 out of 10

-job placement opportunities 1 out of 10

-Peers -Supportive 7 out of 10

-Critical events (unusual circumstances; i.e., trial, friend shot, expelled from school) 9 out of 10

-Role Models 1 out of 10

-Critical event (s)

(vicariously learning what not to do, i.e., job skills).

1 out of 10

Community Significant others

-Supportive 3 out of 10

(Pastor, community leader)

-Role models 3 out of 10

Work Experience -Identify interest/skills/Information 1 out of 10

Summary of Results

This section reports the experiences that participants identified in their perception of the affects of workforce training to their vocational interests. Many of the participants' own words are used to emphasize their experiences as well as to give the reader a better understanding of the themes. The qualitative content analysis was able to highlight themes in examining the substance of the

participants' perceptions and experiences. The contextual categories were examined to determine the influence the youth received prior to incarceration and the effects of Project RIO-Y training on vocational interests. The sample was too small to analyze response differences by vocational interests. Each contextual category and accompanying subcategories was introduced, followed by theme descriptions and appropriate youth quotes.

Observations During the Interviews

The participants answered questions with short answers in three worded sentences such as "right to it." Although many of the youth had short answers they implied that they could probably do the vocational training without being arrested and were queried more using a supplemental probe. I would query about the nature of the task or the results of the work when the youth were nonverbal or lack little response, in order to obtain more in-depth, insightful responses about the participants' perceptions. The participants were asked to reflect on their vocational interests and how they developed. I was particularly interested in their accounts of events, their responses and interpretations of those events, and the impact or effects of the training program while incarcerated. This line of questions used an interpretive or naturalistic inquiry guided the approach to the study of African Americans' development of vocational interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1989) and notes were taken during the interview. The participants were reluctant to talk and were very guarded during the interview. Much of this guarded response was decrease

through talking about familiar places in their home town and sports figures or events. In the researcher debriefing with the counselors, some of the participants lied during the interview about their career goals. I during the interview was relaxed in an informal dress. I related in a non-threatening manner with slight expressions on things said that was related too.

The duration of the interviews varied slightly with the person being interviewed. Each individual interview with the ten youth lasted approximately one to 1½ hours. For security reason the interviews were conducted in the Project RIO program's training room within the facility.

Individual themes

Themes were identified by utilizing several features of significance:

1. Repetition within and across interviews. Ideas, beliefs, concerns and issues that one or the others discuss repeatedly throughout the interview or/and are brought up at least once in an interview and are then again noted in other interviews are considered significant.
2. Levels and nature of affect. This includes emotion that is evident through nonverbal cues by the youth, such as sudden rise in vocal volume, change in facial expressions and other bodily movements all noted concomitantly with particular content lend significance to that content or theme.

3. Historical explanations, descriptions, and interpretations. The youths' stories of the past and explain and justify present behaviors and meanings were considered significant.
4. Explicit and implicit interpretations. These require connections between the youths' thoughts and activities and meaning ascribed to them whether they are obvious and direct or implied and metaphoric. These interpretations are considered significant.

Family and Peer Influence

The presence of a few role models in family and peer groups, as well as the reinforcement to youths' choices, may have influenced youths' career direction. The youths seem to have benefited from the presence of African American role models. Nearly all the youths reported having at least one family member or friend that they discussed some aspects of what they want to do after school.

The aspect of role model was not a significant factor indicated by the participants. Role models were frequently seem as having no motivation and did not influence participants in the process of developing vocational interests. Three distinct types of role models emerged from their responses: (a) peer influence with little or no vocational exploration, (b) significant others communicating that there were career opportunities for them to pursue, but who had limited success themselves in developing careers (i.e., parents, relatives, church members), and (c) Project RIO counselors who demonstrated that vocational goals can be

accomplished and how to start the process, yet the participants could not have access to them in their environment.

Comments attributed to family or peer revolved around going back to school, one's vocational interests, and/or vocational choice. Youths received generally positive comments about returning to school. For the youths, the emphasis was on the importance of pursuing one's education and realizing one's career interests.

As for the choice of occupations, counselors expressed to the youths were universally positive. Their vocational interests were perceived as good choices and professional or as offering adequate pay and good working conditions. Also many of the youths believed their vocational interests offered solid job prospects and a chance to make good and favorable career exploration.

Home

The home category primarily encompassed all family relationships included in the same household (i.e., parents, siblings, and other relatives). There were a few participants who identified relatives outside the home as instrumental in developing their vocational interest. Participants' responses illuminated the fact that parents and relatives served similar functions. Parents were typically identified as playing a stronger role in terms of their overall support.

The participants were often in trouble with peers, even though they had been given verbal warnings from the parents. The only youth who did not state that

they had supportive parents did not acknowledge that non-supportive parents are an obstacle in pursuing their vocational interest In effect, all youth interviewed believed that parental support was a major factor in developing vocational interest. They specifically agreed upon the beneficial impact of parents who had high expectations and had the ability to provide and reinforce opportunities for vocational interests to develop and grow, but because of their economic condition would not be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

Project RIO-Y Training Influences.

This was the perceptions of those in workforce development training who changed to pursuing their career interests or was learning soft skills to enter entry-level employment.

Project RIO-Y facilitated a decision making on vocation information to work toward their vocational interests by the participants that was a strong component for many youth who saw themselves as capable of success. They focused on completing school, pursuing a career and staying out of trouble. In addition, being able to establish career goals were the most widespread perceptions youths shared about themselves and their vocational interest. Because of their situation, they had become one with the goal, which gave them a career base to follow. The goal focused on completing school and getting a job.

Behavior and expressions of the participants that are different from what was expected based upon the researcher's reading and experiences. These unexpected surprises are significant since they allow the research to recognize ideas which have not yet been published.

Positive attitude by the participants in Project RIO-Y training to help with career exploration and determining that the training was good to prepare to enter school or the workforce. Seven of the participants used positive attitude as a factor which influences their vocational interests such as team-building exercises to show how to use their organizational skills as strength versus a negative activity. These positive attitudes originated from a variety of sources including, family and religion. Youth beliefs also included perceptions of workforce training on vocational interest. Many of the youths indicated they had been motivated by their personal interests in certain vocational areas like horticulture and wood shop, and for the sheer opportunity to learn in a protected environment as they went through the orientation and assessment phases in the Brownwood facility.

Critical events

Critical events were unexpected situations which affected the participants directly or indirectly and played a vital role in their vocational interests. The most vivid events were unusual circumstances such as sudden death of a family member, incarceration, selling drugs and getting caught (see critical events under peers). Interestingly enough, respondents indicated that their experience with peers

influenced them to share similar calamities that got them locked-up in the Texas Youth Commission.

School

Middle and high school was an unimportant context indicated by the youths to receive guidance toward their vocational interests. Individual relationships as well as aspects of their career development were highlighted. This category did not reflect major differences because of age, although there was a tendency for youth with a release from the facility in sight to identify the Project RIO-Y themes (counselor) as contributing to their vocational interests.

The participants did not value teachers and counselors in their public schools for their support as well as their vocational interests. Many of the African American participants indicated specific Project RIO relationships throughout their incarceration had a positive impact on their vocational interest. They related that their soft skills such as creativity, flexibility, self-awareness, listening skills, etc., learned as techniques learned through their Project RIO-Y training they would use to further their career aspiration or get a job.

Community

Three participants understood the value of vocational exploration and employment to one's future vocational interest after completing the Project RIO-Y program. While there were no age differences in the youth, responses for this category indicated that those respondents closer to release verbalized more

frequently with the benefits of school and work experiences to develop career interests. A large percentage of the African American youths believed their vocational interests were not enhanced by significant others in the community who served as role models.

Qualitative Findings

Family

Despite the apparent influence parents have over their children vocational interests, there is an absence of resources that parents can access to provide the career information they need to approach this task effectively. Most of the information that is available focuses on what parents can do to make educational or career choices in the immediate future (Castricone, Wright, Finan, & Gumble, 1982; Jeffery et al, 1992; Kush & Cochran, 1993) Parents are influential throughout adolescence, and many crucial components of career development are developed early in life (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1966; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Super et al., 1996). Parents are influential in developing links to workforce development programs and vocation education programs in schools where their children attend. Parent involvement was important to prevent delayed career development. Clark and Ramsey (1990) theorized that the network of relationships surrounding a person involves one family and the broader community of adults of which the family may be a part (p. 240).

This study identified only a small number of family role models and these did not appear to effect the perception of adjudicated and disabled African Americans' vocational interests. The greatest influences of the family was centered on helping these youth learn vicariously what not to do by demonstrating how to be a good children at home or by spiritually discussing the goodness of God in prevailing in time of trouble, helping to avoid similar problem, crime, or violations and/or joblessness, and providing a verbal encouragement to achieve future success. The role of family was to help the youth understand that they can overcome adjudication and career obstacles and use the workforce development training as a tool to career decisions.

Participants reported a range of factors and influences to which they attributed their vocational interests. Most of them reported a modest impact of role model influence over their vocational interest. Based on their interviews and confirmation this means that they attribute their decisions and actions to parents and assumed very little responsibility for themselves. The participants were not confident in their job readiness ability and their vocational interests were consistent their low level of work experience. Many of the participants reported that they did not have any idea of what they wanted to do upon entry into Project RIO. They attributed this absence to their lack of self-discipline, involvement in school activities, school attendance; attending vocational classes; feeling pushed by teachers, and not interested in school. Several youth said they were motivated to

make money through illicit drugs sell, when their friends were doing likewise, especially when they were in the same neighborhood.

Project RIO-Y

Project RIO-Y is a unique program. It is committed to providing youth with the tools they need to meet the needs of their vocational interests and prepare them for entry-level employment. The counselors explore a range of options in forming a broad context for career exploration and soft skills training. The Counselors have some influence through the training they provide the youth about their awareness concerning the importance vocational choices. Project RIO-Y Counselors have influenced the participants in the study to gain more vocational knowledge with the program's curriculum, including soft skills training and learn other demands of vocational development. The consequences of the counselors' efforts seemed mixed. For some of the participants the support influenced the acquisition of soft skills and to career exploration to encourage the youth to pursue jobs or to enter school.

Community

One of the earlier themes the youth talked about in the interview was the difficulty of career exploration in their neighborhoods. They reported that their community had very few role-models. Although they were encouraged to do well by their parents the opportunity to develop explore career interest was very difficult and conflicting. Many of the parents were unemployed or had very limited

education. It seems that the community is a social barrier that prevented youth from exploring and/or making adequate vocational choices. Communities provide a dynamic network of connections and relationships that impact the life experience of youth, specially their economic opportunities and educational attainment (Wiseman, 2002). Shade (1993) defined the worldview of African Americans youth as cautious, suspicious, and apprehensive. Community seemly exerts more control over African Americans' career choices. Due in part, to incarceration, a real and perceived opportunity structure helps in understanding what lay ahead in pursuit of their vocational interests. Many of the participants reported having very little knowledge of the vocational interests only because of the school they attended, the track in which they were placed in school, or because their parent or teachers did not advise them (Leong, 1995). They tended not to focus on their vocational interest until attending the Project RIO-Y program. This of course is consistent with the literature (Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth, 2001).

Vocational interest development was reportedly made later than the information reported in the literature. For example, some made choices were made as late as high school, although for a majority of the participants it occurred during enrollment in the Project RIO-Y program. Typically, a few youth reported acquiring knowledge about vocations from relatives, community people, and

teachers they had encountered through school programs and classes they found interesting.

Since these means of acquiring vocational information were unsuccessful for these youth, Project RIO-Y was an influential force. Most participants revealed that once they made tentative decisions; they did not discuss them extensively with their parents or peers and generally did not make their aspirations known. It is conceivable that the youth might have received training and encouragement had they done so. If they had they might have used the information as a basis for selecting career exploration opportunities and vocational learning experiences, to illustrate relationships that may exist between vocational interest and career goals. This information can be used to help African American youth understand the relationship between workforce training and career success.

In discussion with their counselors, attempts to engage the youth career aspirations were reported. The Project RIO-Y facilities provided a classroom environment that looked much like a career center or school that seemed just right after their release from their respective facility. The researcher may have encouraged the youth with a work plan that would enable them to thrive in this real world opportunity. The counselors also provided instructional scaffolding, making it possible for youth to carry out tasks like spelling when they were not quite able, correcting their errors in the most accepting way. All of the instruction they offered was filtered through styles that seemed culturally incongruent.

Chapter V

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Strength and Limitations

Strength of this study was the criteria for the participants. It was very specific and this contributed to better homogeneity of the group being studied. Strength was the matching of the examiner and the participants regarding ethnicity and gender. This match provided a rich base for the probing of what might have been privy information.

The selected group of research participants and the unique population being studied may have limited the study. The youth who agreed to participate by sharing their personal experiences may have been different from those who were not chosen to participate. How they differ is unknown. Therefore, these participants should not be considered representative of all adjudicated African American youth with disabilities, who are participating in Project RIO-Y.

Vocational Relevance of the Study

The data on this unique sample is of value to workforce development, education, and juvenile justice. In addition, the results of this study can further be utilized by those responsible for training adjudicated youth by increasing their vocational competence, interests and feeling of vocational knowledge to pursue their interests.

The problems of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are increasingly clear, but there appears to be little support for addressing these problems. Ironically, federal dollars targeted toward adjudicated youth continues to decline at the same time there is a strong research base that document the history of work training programs that work to best assist youth.

Implications for Workforce Trainers

Workforce development Trainers can gain an enhanced understanding of what is needed to assist these adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in terms of increasing their vocational limitations and training. By identifying their vocational shortfalls they can strengthen their existing vocational skills. The workforce development trainer can also develop more models to use, in order to empower adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in similar circumstances to successfully exist workforce development training programs and pursue their vocational interests. More specially, this dissertation suggests that workforce development trainers should facilitate the development of home, school, and community supports for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities, and to develop training approaches that include these juvenile justice institutions in the workforce development endeavor.

Implications for Educators

Strategies to pursue the vocational interests and economic success are needed by educators, who are responsible for implementing vocational programs at

the school level for the youths aimed at developing their career interests, academic achievement and educational levels. This study increased the body of knowledge about adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities who are involved in workforce development training and aided in the replication of that success for others, as it explored the workforce development training and vocational theories contributors involved in career success.

Implications for Juvenile Justice Training

To dramatically improve workforce development training in the juvenile justice system, the workforce developers have needed more relevant information to maximize workforce development training programs exits and create more effective models and programs. This information is beneficial to juvenile justice policy makers so they can better understand the connection between the vocational interests and the training that they are attempting to effect.

Previous research has not focused on the subjective career experiences of these adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities, such as, their internal and external vocational strengths, motivations, and barriers they experienced and how they overcame them. This study described their subjective experiences and explored the effects of training on vocational interests.

The workforce development training programs within the facility would have a “competent and systemic” way of enabling the adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities to exit the juvenile justice system. It would

allow each youth to choose their own path of vocational interests, whether it is through minimum wage jobs, work training programs, or college. For those who desire a entry-level employment, this data might also differentiate between those who aspire to purse a job and those who aspire to pursue their vocational interests. This would be a more effective training method, rather than the current "one size fits all" approach to workforce development training.

When viewed through the researcher's lens focusing on vocational interest, the influences and the Project RIO-Y described by the youth were interesting and varied. The researcher began with a cultural sense of whom and/or what influenced the vocational interests of the participants under investigation. It is the researcher's perception that the educational and employment outcomes of African American male youths may not change career interests unless the high rate of poverty, social and family disruptions and school alienation is given priority. After the data were analyzed, it appeared as though the research questions, while valid and useful as starting point, were somewhat limited in their scope because of the unemployment due to incarceration, poor career options and lack of a solid performance at school.

Suggestions for Future Research

A future study might explore the differences between former adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities that chose to pursue professional careers, with those who did not. Other studies that might yield equally useful

information might include studies of adjudicated youth with disabilities from other races, ethnicities and sub-cultures who have successfully exited Project RIO-Y training and obtained a high school diploma and professional careers after having been an adjudicated youth.

Summary and Conclusions

Increases in the number of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities continue indicate that this population will be a continued focus of the juvenile justice system. Much of the literature that has been written about the African American juvenile population has shown those incarcerated are disproportionately male, poor and have significant learning and/or emotional problems. Studies document the failure of juvenile correctional institutions to provide adequate services to youth with disabilities (Edelman, 2004). These youth require increase research and workforce attention.

Through personal experienced, this study contributed to an understanding of how adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities have receive workforce development training, transcended the odds of their circumstances by their involvement in the Project RIO-Y Program, achieved workforce soft skills, and some vocational success. Those currently in the juvenile justice system can replicate the steps taken by these former participants to achieve graduation and continue in school.

Key issues identified by the literature review and the subsequent training provided by Project RIO-Y staff support the belief that it is feasible to develop a comprehensive array of vocational interest-related strategies for identifying and accommodating adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities while they are in a facility. Given the assumption that adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities' performances are often marginal or substantially below their maximum ability levels, these strategies could be very helpful to large numbers of at-risk and minority youth. Persons developing and implementing these efforts should closely analyze the literature upon which this research is based in order to understand key issues and the complex interrelationships depicted in Project RIO-Y and the juvenile justice system. For example, the following issues are directly related to key concepts cited earlier and should be given careful consideration as potential topics for future research and workforce development efforts: (a) How can the sense of family and community be used as a sense of control over their vocational interest among adjudicated African American youth with disabilities? (b) How can schools and workforce development systems improve the programs provided to adjudicated African American youth with disabilities so their needs are explored and self-determined within their training program is created? (c) How can adjudicated African American youth's with disabilities develop abilities to perform entry-level employment by combining soft skills training and vocational placement related to vocational development within

the juvenile justice system? (d) How can the accomplishments of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities guide through the positive and negative influences within their community and educational environments? (e) How can parents of home, school, and community influences by focusing on soft skills training, self-esteem, role modeling, social acceptance, education attainment and the probability of success or failure of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities vocational interests?

The historical experience that African Americans have had with workforce development training and vocational education explains much of their current problems hindering the development of vocational interests. From the time adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are involved in workforce training, their vocational interest are shaped or influenced by the school curriculums, lack of families who do not have the resources to develop vocational interests, supportive communities with negative peer pressure, and their limited training access to preparation for entry-level jobs.

This study provided some evidences that incarcerated African American male youth with disabilities are affected by the Project RIO-Y training program in identifying some of their vocational interests. More research needs to be conducted to determine whether many incarcerated African American youth with disabilities are less likely to enroll in workforce development training programs, because they do not perceive workforce training as necessary or useful to accomplish their

vocational interests, whether they are being discouraged from participating, or whether they will participate after leaving the facility. Information on the outcomes of workforce training on vocational interest for adjudicated African American male youths with disabilities would identify how workforce development training can increase the occupational achievement of adjudicated African American youth with disabilities. Only then can appropriate training strategies to increase their participation be devised in the juvenile justice system.

A number of limited conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. First, the findings seem to suggest that within workforce development policy and practice, it is appropriate to view training for development of vocational interests in connection with the work that is carried out in other life context such as juvenile justice systems and school. Results, illustrated for example, the cyclical interaction between socioeconomic status, family functioning, influence on the development of vocational interests, and preparation of the youth with disabilities for future work roles.

Vocational interest will generate a desire to learn work skills. The present findings suggest, however, that these alone will not be the simple pathway often sought for ensuring fostering occupational futures for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. The adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in Project RIO-Y success in career exploration and job search appears to be mediated by the Texas Workforce Agency as they return to

their communities. Programs and schooling will assist and hopefully give a second chance, but not guarantee it. It seems to make good sense to include business, community and school as partners in workforce initiatives designed to improve the transition from the Texas Youth Commission to work or school. The dynamics of this relationship will improve services for adjudicated African American youth with disabilities and address more intensive workforce development training with youths with the greater level of need.

Second, the study implies that using workforce development training to develop vocational interest has thus far have been too limited. Programs such as Project RIO-Y contribute to developing vocational interests in a number of ways. Some of the ways the program curriculum develops these youth are the following: (a) helping the youth acquires effective soft skills; (b) discipline and guidance; and (c) develop work values. But, as shown, communities support vocational interests, although limited, through the strength of their work values, and the manner in which significant persons in the at-risk environment go about the day-to-day work. This is done the youth acquiring a sense of ownership and developing close relationships with others. We must develop a comprehensive youth development program in the community that links parent and family and community-based strategies with second chance workforce development training strategies. This linkage through involvement will support the youths acquiring positive work behavior and values, responding to rules and structure, persisting and working hard

to accomplish goals, work attitude, and staying out of trouble (Fox & Lyons, 2003).

This study raises a number of questions that can be addressed only through implementation of a future workforce development training research agenda, which acknowledges the interrelationships among vocational interest, family, school and community. Past workforce development training research appears to have been seriously confined by a number of viewpoints, which mediate against viewing vocational interests, family, school and community as interacting domains of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities. These include the differentiation of career roles according to disabilities, gender, and stereotype of the African American youth and family. The present study represents only a beginning in what should be a full future agenda of research regarding adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities vocational development in the workforce.

As a result, the outline of unanswered research issues is proposed as a starting place for filling what appears to be a serious omission in the workforce development training research agenda. Preparation for vocational interest to develop for adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities simply can no longer be disconnected from other key life roles, most especially school, family, and community roles that will influence their career development.

In conclusion, the labor market of the future is an uncertain place, especially for African American youth. Adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities are challenged workforce, government and juvenile justice reforms, corporate downsizing, increasing international competition and rapid technological changes. The study from these real life experiences are beneficial for individuals and institutions seeking specific strategies to achieve vocational interests success, which leads toward career and psychological fulfillment.

Recommendations

It is my concern that, despite Project RIO-Y's efforts, the structure and function of traditional detention programs may actually preclude positive development of vocational interests with African American youth with disabilities, unless they develop more diverse and culturally sensitive programming. Moreover, the following recommendations are made:

- Conduct a comprehensive statewide survey to determine the perceptions and knowledge of the effects of workforce development on vocational interests of all youth, but with a specific focus on racial/ethnic subgroups.
- Conduct further research investigations on ways in which social and economic information about the juvenile and his family has an impact on developing vocational interests.

- Develop and evaluate a program for juvenile justice workforce development training personnel to increased cultural awareness training on a regular and on-going basis. This training is especially important for personnel who interact regularly with African American juveniles. Training efforts should include content that will increase understanding of the characteristics, culture and needs of African American males and families. It should also address issues of racial (as well as gender and schooling) stereotyping of African American males, families and communities, and the implications associated with this. Issues associated with the development of career interests in race, class and gender should be explored.
- Develop and evaluate more on-going community-based workforce development training programs that can better serve the African American male population. Effective community-based workforce development training efforts that consider and understand the needs of African American males and families will assist in reducing the lack of vocational influences and training needs.
- Develop mechanisms for closer collaboration between family, school, and community-based organizations and the Project RIO-Y programs. This type of collaboration is important for

motivating the youth, further education and to gain employment so that they can be enrolled in workforce development training programs and given the programming that would prevent them from reentering the juvenile justice system.

- Continue to research in various contextual situations examining the workforce development framework of adjudicated African American male youth with disabilities in terms of work skills, workforce competencies and training.

Appendix A

Participant Bill of Right

Project RIO

Hello. My name is Luther Baker. I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin and I'm doing a research study on youth career experiences in Project RIO and experience in home, community and school(s) attended. You were selected for this study because you have been an active participant in Project RIO in this facility. I plan to use the results of this study to help make it easier for youth to identify and pursue their career interest. Your participation will be extremely valuable in helping me to complete this study.

There is no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are about you and how you see things.

Participation in this interview is strictly voluntary and your identity is confidential. If at any time you do not wish to continue the interview, you may request that the interview be stopped without any type of penalty.

Thanks again for your participation.

Appendix B

Interview for Pilot Study

Date of Interview_____ Location_____

Hello. My name is Luther Baker. I'm a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin and I'm doing a research study on youth career experiences in Project RIO and career experiences in the home, community and school(s) attended. You were selected for this study because you have been an active participant in Project RIO in this facility. I plan to use the results of this study to help make it easier for youth to identify and pursue their career interest. Your participation will be extremely valuable in helping me to complete this study.

There is no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are about you and how you see things.

Appendix C

Interview Schedule Guide

Youth Interview

Research Questions:

PART I: Biographical Information

Adolescence: Location; family circumstances (marriage, divorce, stress, living arrangements); siblings; friends; extended family; school experiences; successes; failures; friends; What kinds of things are important to your closes group of friends? Are your friends good, average, or poor students, generally? Significant adolescent experiences; that are the most educated adult you know? How much does this person have? What does the person do? Who is the smartest person you know? How do you see yourself in ten years? Where do you live? a house, apartment? What is your favorite thing about your neighborhood? What don't you like? Describe what your parents do: type of work, home activities, for fun.

PART II: Context of Education

Relationships: Explore the relationship with mother/father/brothers/sisters. Other significant relatives: grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. The relationship between the participant and work? Expectations? Limitations? How do these impact your career interest?

Relationships with teachers: Teachers you feel you have learned from: What did you learn from them? How would you describe your relationship with them? How has this helped or hindered you being a student in Project RIO?

Relationship with Peers: Tell me about the friends you have at school? What do you do together? What are the interests you share? Tell me about the friends you have outside the school? What do you do together? What interests do you share? How much time do you spend with your friends?

PART III: Educational Experiences

Being a student: What is your favorite subject? Why? What does educational success mean to you? What have been your best experiences at this school? Why was that a good experience? What have been some of the most difficult times? Why were they difficult?

Being an African American male student: Does being an African American male affect your success? How? Are there advantages/disadvantages in being an African American male? What are they?

Educational Achievement: Significant educational experiences; Do you agree that you can be anything you want to be? Explain what kinds of things need to be in your life for this to be real for you? What kinds of things need to be in your life for this to be real for you? What kinds of things might try to block your aspirations? How would you overcome the obstacles? What does your family say about your

dreams? What do your friends say about your dreams? What leadership opportunities have you had? What college have you looked at?

PART IV: Perception of Self

Being a youth: How would you describe yourself as a youth? What are your strength/weaknesses? What work opportunities have you had? Have you been involved in work training or vocational education activities? In term of terms of the past, what is the first job you have had? Describe. How did it influence you?

Appendix D

Texas Youth Commission

Project RIO Program Overview

Project RIO-Y' mission is to provide incarcerated youth with post-release career and training opportunities and with youth development skills necessary for them to find and maintain employment as productive members of society. RIO-Y also seeks to reduce recidivism among at-risk youth in the state and to increase the social and economic independence of disadvantaged youth.

Project RIO-Y was created by the Texas legislature in 1996 as collaboration between the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The project was initially designed to serve youth in TYC residential facilities in eleven counties throughout the State of Texas. Youth received employment assistance and supportive services from the Texas Workforce Commission upon transition to aftercare. Beginning in September 1998, Texas Youth Commission youth from any part of the state were eligible to enroll in the program as long as they met some basic eligibility requirements.

Project RIO-Y operated in the Texas Youth Commission's residential facilities. Youth participating in the program are between the ages of 16 to 21. The following requirements must be met for participation: volunteer for the program; be recommended by staff; have at least six months remaining before their release date; and have a high school diploma or be in the process of earning one or completing a GED.

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